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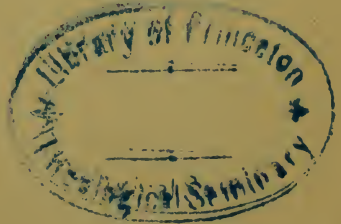
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REVELATION



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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

THE AUTHOR OF THE APOCALYPSE.—There is very strong external evidence to prove that this book was written by the Apostle John. Passing over some earlier apparent witnesses, we find unmistakable mention of it in the writings of Justin Martyr. He expressly refers to it as the work of the apostle, in the dialogue which he held with Trypho, an unbelieving Jew, in the very city of Ephesus where John lived, and within half a century after his death. Equally clear and explicit is the testimony of Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John. Irenæus even gives as his authority for preferring 666 to 616 as “the number of the beast” (chap. xiii. 18), the testimony of those who had seen John face to face. The book is twice mentioned in the Canon of the Muratorian Fragment, once in such a way as to imply that it was publicly read in church; it was one of the books on which Melito, Bishop of Sardis, wrote a commentary (about 170 A.D.); and it is expressly quoted as “the Scripture” in the letter sent by the persecuted Christians of Vienne and Lyons to their brethren in Asia Minor (177 A.D.). But soon after the middle of the second century the book began to be regarded with suspicion, owing to the use made of it by the Montanists, who indulged in extravagant notions regarding the “thousand years” of Christ’s reign with His saints (chap. xx.). The feeling of distrust was strengthened by observing what a marked difference there was in the language and style of the Revelation and of the other works ascribed to John; and a considerable amount of controversy took place on the subject. Ultimately, however, the objections were overruled, and the book obtained general acceptance in the Church. In modern times the controversy has been renewed; and objectors are still disposed to insist, as of old, on the internal marks of a different authorship from that of the fourth Gospel. In particular it is pointed out that whereas the Gospel is written in good Greek, the Revelation is full of grammatical mistakes and eccentricities. To meet this objection the following considerations may be adduced:—(1) The difference in the nature and contents of the two books; the one being mainly narrative or colloquial, the other being formed on the model of the Old Testament prophets. (2) The possible effect on the Apostle of twenty years’ residence in Ephesus, in the way of improving his knowledge of Greek. (3) The unfavourable circumstances under which he appears to have written the Revelation; and the possible employment by him of a skilled Greek amanuensis in the composition of the Gospel. On the other hand, amid all the diversity between the two books both in ideas and in language, there are not wanting some important features of resemblance, betokening an identity of authorship. 1. The name “Lamb” is only applied to the Saviour in the fourth Gospel (John i. 29, 36) and in the Revelation (chap. v. 6, 8, 12, &c.), although it is indirectly referred to in 1 Peter i. 19 and Acts viii. 32. In like manner the name “Word” is only applied to the Saviour in the Gospel of John (chap. i. 1, &c.), in First Epistle of John (chap. i. 1, “the Word of life”), and in the Revelation (chap. xix. 13, “the Word of God”). 2. Some of John’s favourite expressions, such as “he that overcometh,” “witness” (noun or verb), “keep (my) word,” are of frequent occurrence in the Revelation. 3. In Revelation i. 7 we seem to have an echo of John xix. 34–37, where alone the piercing

of our Lord with the spear is recorded, and where there is the same quotation of Zech. xii. 10—in the same unusual form. 4. The Greek word meaning “true” or “real,” in opposition to what is false or spurious, occurs nine times in St. John’s Gospel, four times in 1 John, and ten times in the Revelation; but only five times in all the rest of the New Testament. 5. The Revelation, like the fourth Gospel, recognises our Lord’s pre-eminence and His title to Divine honours (chaps. i. 8, 17, 18; iii. 14, 21; v. 9, 13; xix. 16; xxii. 13). 6. A still stronger feature of resemblance may be seen in the similarity of the representations which the two books give of the Saviour’s triumph as resulting from successive conflicts terminating in apparent and temporary defeat. In these conflicts the Gentiles take the place held by the unbelieving Jews in the Gospel; and the “disciples” of the earlier days are represented by the Church, or “the bride” (of Christ). It has been objected that the Revelation, unlike the other writings of John, gives the name of its avowed author (chaps. i. 1, 4, 9; xxii. 8). But this is sufficiently accounted for by the prophetic character of the book. It was the practice of the prophets of the Old Testament, although not of the historians, to mention their names in their writings. (*J. A. McClymont, D.D.*)

TIME AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION.—As to the time of its composition, tradition is far from consistent. The author of the Muratorian fragment, *e.g.*, incidentally places it earlier than the Pauline epistles; but Irenæus expressly states that it “was seen towards the close of the reign of Domitian.” This is sometimes interpreted as implying that the book was also written then; but more probably he intended his readers to understand that it was written after Domitian’s death—under Nerva, or perhaps even in the reign of Trajan. But Tertullian seems to suggest the time of Nero as the date. Jerome dates the supposed banishment of John certainly, and the writing probably, in the 14th year of Domitian; but in this, perhaps, he is only repeating Irenæus. There is some reason to think that this date is partly derived from an interpretation of chap. i. 9, which is not now usually accepted. Epiphanius mentions the time of Claudius. The place where the Revelation was received is professedly Patmos, and ancient writers usually assumed that it was also committed to writing there. . . . The two-sided character of the evidence, both external and internal, as to date led Grotius (1644) to suggest that the problem raised by it might perhaps be solved by the assumption that the book was written by its one author at different times, partly in Patmos and partly at Ephesus. Vogel (1811–1816) offered a different solution—that it was written partly by the Apostle John and partly by the presbyter John, a theory which seems to have had some attraction for Schleiermacher, and, temporarily at least, for Bleek. Völter (1882–1885) thinks that the original Apocalypse as written by the Apostle in 65–66 A.D. consists of: chaps. i. 4–6; iv. 1–v. 10; vi. 1–vii. 8; viii.; ix.; xi. 14–19; xiv. 1–7; xviii. 1–xix. 14; xiv. 14–20; xix. 5–10. To this the Apostle himself (68–69 A.D.) added chaps. x. 1–xi. 13; xiv. 8; xvii. It received subsequent additions by other hands in the time of Trajan (chaps. xi. 15, 18; xii.; xix. 11–12; xx.; xxi. 1–8), of Hadrian (chaps. v. 11–14; vii. 9–17; xiii.; xiv. 4, 5, 9–12; xv. 1–xvii. 1), and of Antoninus Pius (prologue, epistles to churches, &c.). A new line of investigation in the same direction was opened by Vischer, who (1886) sought to show that the groundwork of the composite book was primarily not Christian but Jewish, written in Hebrew, but translated and freely adapted by a Christian redactor. This view was accepted by Harnack (1886), and substantially, though with large modifications, by Pfeiderer (1887), and Weyland (1888). Schön also (1887) and Sabatier (1888) maintained the composite character of the work, holding it, however, to be essentially of Christian origin (end of first century) but with incorporation of Jewish fragments. The most powerful and suggestive of recent works based on the theory of composite origin is that of Spitta (1889), who distinguishes a Christian Apocalypse, dating from about 60 A.D., which he attributes to John Mark, and two Jewish Apocalypses dating respectively from Pompey’s capture of Jerusalem in 63 B.C., and from Caligula’s time, about 40 A.D. These three sections of the work correspond roughly to the visions of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials. The work of redaction, Spitta holds, was done towards the end of the first century. (*J. Sutherland Black.*)

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE.—According to St. Augustine, the events which come to pass in this world are neither fortuitous nor isolated. Divine Providence directs, co-ordinates, and controls them all, causing everything to concur towards the triumph of purity, holiness, justice, and truth. Whoever hears the

voice from on high and follows it, belongs to the elect people—to “the City of God”; beside which lies the city of the earth occupied with the interests of this lower sphere—a city proud, tyrannical, the persecutor of the saints, but which does not the less subserve, albeit by means of which it is unconscious, the establishment of the Divine Kingdom. Such was Babylon in the East; such was Rome in the West: both imperial cities, and both ordained to diffuse God’s revelation—the one the Old Testament, the other the New. The empire of Rome was universal, because such must be the Kingdom of Christ: and as the Old Law was but the preparation for the New, so all events in the old world converged towards Rome and towards the Coming of Christ; in the same manner as all events after that Coming have concurred to the final triumph and to the universality of the Christian Faith. If this central thought be kept in mind, many interpretations, seemingly opposed to each other will be found to harmonize; it being assumed that the *successive* events which are taken to be the *complete* accomplishment of an Apocalyptic prediction are but illustrations merely—*specimens*, so to speak—of God’s dealings with the Church and with the world. There are three principal systems of exposition, as they are commonly classified, according to which the Apocalypse has, for the most part, been interpreted:—the Preterist, the Historical or Continuous, the Futurist. To these, however, must be added the principle of interpretation which adopts for its leading idea the great conception of St. Augustine stated above. This system may be styled the “Spiritual.” As Ebrard says: “The Apocalypse does not contain presages of contingent, isolated events; but it contains warning and consolatory prophecies concerning the great leading forces which make their appearance in the conflict between Christ and the enemy. So full are its contents that every age may learn therefrom, more and more, against what disguises of the serpent one has to guard oneself; and also how the afflicted Church at all times receives its measure of courage and of consolation.” (*Archdeacon Lee*.)

CONTENTS.—I. THE PROLOGUE (chaps. i.-iii.), setting forth—1. The vision of Christ, including the commission given to the Apostle (chap. i. 1, 11, 19); an intimation of the historical personality of the seer, as well as the place and occasion of his receiving the Revelation (vers. 9-11). 2. The enumeration of the Seven Churches (chaps. i. 11; ii., iii.) which symbolise the Church universal (chap. iii. 22) for whose sake the prophetic utterances are intended. 3. The Seven Epistles (chaps. ii., iii.). II. THE REVELATION PROPER (chaps. iv. 1-xxii. 5). 1. The prelude (chaps. iv., v.) which introduces the Divine judgments. These chapters contain two scenes—the appearance in heaven of the throne of God (chap. iv.), and the appearance of the Lamb who takes the sealed book “out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne” (chap. v.). 2. The vision of the seven seals (chaps. vi. 1-viii. 1), including an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals which consists of two scenes—that of the sealing of the elect (chap. vii. 1-8), and that of the “great multitude which no man could number” (chap. vii. 9-17). 3. The vision of the seven trumpets (chaps. viii. 2-xi. 19), including as before an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, which again consists of two scenes—that of the “little book” (chap. x. 1-11), and that of the “two witnesses” (chap. xi. 1-14). 4. The vision of the woman and her three enemies (chaps. xii. 1-xiii. 18) the dragon (chap. xii. 3-17), the beast from the sea (chaps. xii. 18-xiii. 10), the beast from the earth or “false prophet” (chap. xiii. 11-18). 5. The group of visions in chap. xiv. (1) The vision of the Lamb with His company on Mount Zion (vers. 1-5). (2) The vision of the three angels proclaiming judgments (vers. 6-11). (3) The episode (vers. 12, 13). (4) The vision of the harvest and the vintage (vers. 14-20). 6. The vision of the seven vials (chaps. xv. 1-xvi. 21), again including an interlude between the sixth and seventh vials which now consists of one scene—that of the three unclean spirits gathering the kings of the earth “into the place which is called Har-Magedon” (chap. xvi. 13-16). 7. The vision of the final triumph (chaps. xvii. 1-xxii. 5), presenting four scenes. (1) The history and fall of Babylon (chaps. xvii. 1-xix. 10)—the hostile world-power. (2) The overthrow of Satan (chaps. xix. 11-xx. 10)—the hostile spiritual power. (3) The universal judgment (chap. xx. 11-15). (4) The glories of the new Jerusalem (chaps. xxi. 1-xxii. 5). III. THE EPILOGUE (chap. xxii. 6-21) which gradually passes from visionary representation, and referring back in ver. 8 to the prologue, closes with a Divine attestation, and with threats mingled with promises. (*Ibid.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1-3. The Revelation of Jesus Christ.—*The Revelation of Jesus Christ :—*

I. THE REVELATION, OR APOCALYPSE. 1. This sacred book is called the Revelation, or Apocalypse, to express its origin. It is the Word of the living God, given by Divine inspiration, and invested with Divine authority. 2. It is called the Apocalypse to express its nature. It gives a blessed manifestation of the character, counsels, and dealings of God. 3. It is called the Apocalypse, to express its object. There is an objective revelation of the character and will of God which is given in His Word; of the great plan of mercy which is given in the gospel; of the great events of Providence which are given in sacred prophecy. 4. It is called the Apocalypse, to express its subject. There is a subjective revelation experienced by the saint, consisting in the saving illumination of the Spirit (Matt. xi. 25; Psa. cxix. 18). 5. It is called the Apocalypse, to express its great design. The word signifies to remove the veil that conceals an object from view. 6. There is, notwithstanding this glorious manifestation, considerable darkness resting on this book. It is denominated "The mystery of God." This obscurity arises from the depth of the counsels of heaven, from the symbolical language in which they are revealed, from the prophetic nature of the sacred book. But amid all the mystery with which it is enveloped, there is a light within the cloud to illuminate and cheer. **II. THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.** 1. It is a revelation from Him as the great Author, and the great Medium, and the great Depositary, and the great Dispenser of Divine revelation, and all its hopes, promises, and blessings. 2. It is a revelation concerning Him as the great subject, the sum and substance of the glorious gospel. 3. It is a revelation through Him, as the medium of Divine communication, as the great Prophet and Teacher of the Church. 4. It is a revelation to Him as the great object, the end, the proprietor of the oracles of heaven. It is His—His own peculiar charge, and His own Divine prerogative. In Him all the lines of Divine truth centre; from Him all the beams of its glory irradiate; to Him all the prophets gave witness. **III. THE GREAT DESIGN OF THIS SACRED CHARGE.** 1. The nature of this design. It is "to show." This partially explains the word "revelation," which is to make manifest what was before concealed. It also explains the word "signified," which is to show verbally, in plain language; or symbolically, by signs or symbols. 2. The persons to whom this design is made known. They are "servants"—the servants of God, by a devout and voluntary surrender of themselves. They are not only servants, but they are kings and priests. To these distinguished servants God's holy will is given. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant. 3. The objects revealed. 4. The time of fulfilment—"Things that must shortly come to pass." (1) This may be viewed personally, as referring to ourselves as individuals. The time of our departure is at hand. "Lord teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." (2) It may be viewed generally. The time is at hand with regard to the Church, and the end of the world, and the day of judgment. (3) It may be viewed comparatively. The time is short when we view it in connection with eternity. (4) It may be viewed progressively with respect to the nature, the order, and arrangement of Divine operation—the time is at hand. 5. As the message was important, so the messenger was honourable: "He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant

John." (1) The message, and how it was delivered. He signified and testified, or showed it; He made it manifest by plain words, direct testimony, and by signs or symbols (Hos. xii. 10). (2) The person that sent—"He sent." God the Father sent His angel to His servant John. The Lord Jesus sent His angel: I, Jesus, sent Mine angel to testify to you these things in the Churches. (3) The messenger sent was "His angel." All the holy angels are His by creation, providence, electing love, confirming grace, and sacred office. But some He selects for distinguished services. (*Jas. Young.*) *The design of the book and reward for its study:*—There is an irresistible charm in lofty eminences. There is exhilaration in ascending them, though attended, often, with much fatigue. Similar should be the charm of this wondrous book. I. THE TITLE—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ." II. THE DESIGN. "To show unto His servants," &c. III. THE SPECIAL PROMISE. "Blessed is he that readeth," &c. (*D. C. Hughes.*) *The preface:*—I. ITS ORIGINAL SOURCE is expressed in the title which the author gives to his book. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and not the revelation; as though it were the only one which He has given, or the only one which He gave to His servant John. There may be a reference in this term to the special design of this book to reveal the time and manner of the Saviour's coming. It was an exciting topic then, as it is now; and many were the conflicting sentiments that were entertained concerning the apocalypse, or revelation of Jesus Christ. It is styled "a Revelation of Jesus Christ," because in His mediatorial person, as Immanuel, or God-man, and in His official capacity as the great Prophet and Teacher of His Church, He was the principal party in making it known. Yet in this, as in every other part of His work, He acts by delegated authority from the Father, and in suberviency to His will. Not less in heaven than on earth, in His glorification than in the scenes of His humiliation, is He the medium of communication between God and His redeemed. This revelation was given to Jesus Christ "to show unto His servants." It was given to Christ to reveal to others. He knew them before. The revelation was not made for Him, but for Him to make known. The persons to whom He is empowered to reveal them are "His servants." The servants of Christ, or of God, are the redeemed. This He is ready to do by His Word, and the teaching of His Spirit. II. OF THE GENERAL CHARACTER of these contents we are thus informed: they are "things which must shortly come to pass." It is not a history of the past, nor a record of the present, but a prophecy of the future. It is not a mass of conjecture, but of certainties. Though pending upon the fickleness of human passions, the whole future course of events is as unalterably fixed as the past. III. We are informed to whom this revelation, in the first instance, was made known. "He sent and signified it . . . unto His servant John." He teaches one, that this one may teach many. Ministers should look for their teaching immediately from Christ. John had borne a faithful testimony of the things which had been, and now he is to bear record of the things that should be hereafter. Those who have evinced a sound judgment, and given a faithful record of things which are, and have been, are best qualified to treat of things to come. IV. We are informed of THE MANNER in which this revelation was communicated by Jesus Christ to His servant John: "He sent and signified it by His angel." God gives the revelation to Jesus Christ, and He to an angel, and the angel to John. The word "angel," which simply signifies a messenger, is not applied in Scripture exclusively to that particular order of beings of which it is the generic term. What more natural to conclude than that saints carry with them their prevailing disposition to heaven; and that the saint whose heart was most interested in the events here recorded should have been selected by Christ as His messenger to John? We have Moses and Elias appearing in angelic forms to our Lord upon the mount. Why not Isaiah or Jeremiah, or Daniel, to John in the isle of Patmos? V. We are informed of THE PURPOSE for which this revelation was recorded. It was for our study and observance; "Blessed is he that readeth," &c. Whoever undertakes to read the Divine Word to others, shall be blessed in his deed. While he is reading new light will burst upon the sacred page, and his own mind will be instructed. The hearers too will be blessed. Few, if any methods, are better adapted to ascertain the meaning of Scripture, and to impress it upon the mind, than its being read by one and afterwards made the subject of mutual inquiry and observation. The multiplication of copies ought not to have superseded this wholesome practice. Let the reading and familiar discussion of all parts of the sacred volume once become general, and a blessing, as the dew of Hermon, will descend upon the mountains of Zion. A particular reason for the blessedness which would accompany the study of this book

is given in the concluding observation: "for the time is at hand." This had a special application to the Churches to which it is first addressed. It was an intimation to them that the first events of the series in which they were principally concerned would speedily occur. It was needful, therefore, that they should take them at once into serious consideration. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Let them avail themselves of these preadmonitions, and they would experience the blessedness of those who are prepared for the conflict and sure of final victory. Conclusion: 1. The Church is entrusted with the observation and improvement of events as they rise. 2. It must adapt itself to external changes in the use of appointed means. 3. Prophecy is intended to point out the direction in which its energies should be employed. (*G. Rogers.*)

Divine revelations:—Christians are not confined to this world in their enjoyments of life. They not merely behold the things of men, but also the things of God; not merely the things of time, but also those of eternity. I. THEY PROCEED FROM THE INFINITE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE. 1. God is the primal author of spiritual revelations. He is the source of light, and alone can cause it to shine from heaven into the heart of man. 2. Christ is the sympathetic medium of spiritual revelations. St. John is here writing of Him as having ascended to heaven with a Divine-human nature. 3. Varied messengers are the communicating agencies of revelation. Angelic ministeries are interested in the instruction of the good. Who was the messenger here employed? It would seem that prophetic fires were kindled in some ancient seer who had entered upon his heavenly rest, and that he was employed to uncover to the imprisoned apostle the sublime visions of this book. II. THEY ARE GIVEN TO THOSE ENGAGED IN THE MORAL SERVICE OF THE UNIVERSE. "To show unto His servants." 1. They are not given to the nationally presumptuous. These have other visions more welcome to their ambitious spirits—visions of fame. They would rather dream of servile crowds paying them transient homage, than be permitted the grandest revelation of heaven that is possible to human soul. 2. They are not given to the socially great. They are not given to kings by virtue of their kingdom. They are not given to the warrior in acknowledgment of his victory. They are not given to the wealthy in praise of their industry and thrift. They are rather given to the humble, to the poor in spirit, to the pure in heart, to the loving servants of the Lord. 3. They are not given to the intellectually wise. To untutored minds, but of heavenly thought, things Divine are made known, far grander than are suspected by the students of earthly things. They are given to the good—(1) Because the good are in sympathy with God. (2) Because the good will live under the influence of the revelation. (3) Because the good will be faithful to the revelation. III. THEY ARE GIVEN AT TIMES OF SOLITUDE AND GRIEF. 1. The good man's solitude is never lonely. But when earth is far removed, when the hurry of business and the excitement of pleasure are behind, then come those heavenly visions which so enrich the soul. 2. God does not forsake His faithful servants in their time of need. In the furnace we get bright visions of the Son of Man. IV. THEY ARE DESIGNED TO INTERPRET THE EVENTFUL AGES OF MANKIND. 1. Man is unable to interpret the spiritual meaning of the ages. 2. The moral significance of the ages ought to engage our most careful study. Lessons: 1. Adore the condescension of God in revealing Himself to man. 2. Praise the glory of God which He has manifested to your soul in time of vision. 3. Live and write the spiritual revelations of the Eternal. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Aspects of human history:—I. AS A REVELATION. Christ reveals the future history of mankind—1. By disclosing its essential principles. 2. By the dispensations of Providence. II. AS A RECORD. 1. Here is a commission from heaven to record certain things. 2. Here is a commission from heaven to reveal certain things, addressed to a man. 3. Here is a commission from heaven to record certain things, addressed to a man of the highest moral class. III. AS A STUDY. 1. Historic events are of moral significance. 2. The moral significance involves a Divine law. 3. In practical obedience to this Divine law there is true happiness. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

To show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.—*Christ's cabinet council:*—For the behoof and benefit of the family of faith who are all of Christ's cabinet council. (*J. Trapp.*)

Timely warning:—I. TIMELY REVELATION. "To show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." There was a time when we did not see into the evil of sin as we were afterwards led to do. There was a time when we did not see into the infallible certainty of the judgment of God as we did when the Lord was pleased to cause the weighty matters of judgment to sink down deep into our souls. Then the question was, How are we

to escape this tremendous evil? What, then, is to be done? Some of us ran one way, and some another; but ere long the Lord showed unto us that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. II. CONFIRMATION. Now these are the servants of the Lord that are thus brought to serve Him in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter; that are thus brought to serve Him, not at Mount Gerizim, nor at Jerusalem, nor any other earthly locality, but brought to serve Him in spirit and in truth, and consequently to worship Him everywhere. And we need confirming in these things, or else our unbelief, our many infirmities, our many trials, would put an end to His religion. And so we need confirming from time to time in God's truth in order to keep us pursuing. How does the Lord confirm us now? Is it not by a fresh manifestation of the redeeming power of the blood of the Lamb? Is it not by a fresh opening up unto us of the excellency of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ? III. DIRECTION. What a mercy this is! It is a great thing to be guided by the Lord; there is not anything too hard for Him. I have found it good in my time to watch the hand of the Lord in all these things. So, then, "to show unto His servants," to direct them; and He does in many of His dealings say, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." IV. THE THINGS THAT WERE SHORTLY TO COME TO PASS. Now there are two orders of things that were shortly to come to pass; one very unpleasant, and the other exceedingly pleasant. Well, you and I know not what troubles lie in our path yet, but there is not anything too hard for the Lord. I am not going to look to coming troubles—that is not my business, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." So, then, if tribulation shall abound, consolation shall abound also. But now I must be careful in pointing out the pleasant circumstances—"things which must shortly come to pass." To speak plainly, it means that these people should soon be in heaven. You observe that every one of the promises is founded upon victory. "To him that overcometh." It is a legal victory, or victory of right. In righteousness did He judge and make war. He strove for the victory lawfully. Now the Lord shows unto His servants the way of victory, and that way is by faith in what the Saviour has done. (*Jas. Wells.*) *Advantage of revelation*:—If there be no revelation, we have no hope, and can have no comfort in our death, and no assurance of immortality after it. If there be no revelation, we are in a perpetual maze, as if we were at sea without star or compass, and knew not what course to take to gain our harbour. (*Bp. Williams.*) *His servant John, who bare record*.—*The Christianity of St. John*:—Of what sort was the Christianity of St. John between thirty and forty years after Christ's death, as we find it in the Book of the Revelation? (1) In chap. iv. we have a vision reminding us of Isaiah and Ezekiel. There is a Throne, and One who sits on it. He is Lord and God. He lives for ever and ever. He created all things, and is worthy to receive glory and honour and power. In the second chapter we read of One who is the Son of God. He in whom St. John believes is therefore God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. (2) This Son of God is Jesus Christ, who is also King of kings and Lord of lords, and therefore Lord of all men, our Lord. The Lamb, that is Christ, is worshipped by every created thing, in one breath with Him that sitteth upon the Throne. (3) The Incarnation of Christ is implied in His crucifixion, His blood, His death, and the title, or description, Son of Man. All of these are expressly mentioned in the Revelation. Besides we find Christ described by him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and the Root of David. (4) That Christ suffered is implied in His overcoming, and in His being a Lamb, as it had been slain; a phrase recalling the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the suffering is described at length, and where it is foretold that the Sufferer shall triumph after death. (5) The Descent into Hades must be understood from the words, "I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," &c. The Resurrection is not only stated in these and other like words, but is a fundamental conception of the whole book. (6) We do not read of the Ascension; yet as the death took place on earth, and Christ is described as in heaven after His resurrection, an ascension is implied. (7) The sitting on the Throne of God, and the coming again to judgment are so prominent as to need no special reference. (8) Then we have the Spirit, symbolised in His abundant powers by the seven lamps before the Throne, and again by the seven eyes of the Lamb. From this last may we not infer the double procession? (9) The Communion of Saints is indicated in many ways. The Angels of the Seven Churches are wreathed into a garland of stars in the right hand of the Son of Man. The souls of the martyrs, under

the altar, are to wait for their brethren. The great multitude who have come out of the great tribulation stand before the Throne and before the Lamb. (10) The Remission of Sins meets us in the very first chapter; (11) the Resurrection of the Dead comes in the twentieth; and (12) the Life Everlasting is the one great gift variously shadowed forth by the Tree of Life, the Crown of Life, the Hidden Manna, the Morning Star, the Book of Life, the Pillar in the Temple, the Sitting Down with Christ on His Throne; the Seven Gifts to the Seven Churches. Here then, in this venerable monument of the apostolic age, are all the Articles of the Christian faith, as we now have them in our creed. 2. Until a man has made a careful study of the Revelation, he might very possibly set it down as a tissue of harsh allegories, thrown together without skill or method, and betokening little in its author but a bewildered enthusiasm. But indeed there is in it a wonderful order. The whole book seems to have been all present to the writer's mind at once, like the universe to the mind of the Creator, before a word of it was written. Vision follows vision, each complete in itself, like a picture, yet all adding something new, like each of the seven parables in the 13th of St. Matthew, to the manifold lineaments of the kingdom of heaven. Then there is this peculiarity: Almost every phrase of the Revelation has its counterpart in the old Testament. The Revelation consists of Old Testament ideas spiritually combined with New Testament narratives. 3. St. John, after all, only translates the Old Testament prophecies out of their local dialect into catholic speech. Malachi's pure offering in every place, Zechariah's feast of tabernacles, Daniel's kingdom of the saints, Jeremiah's Jerusalem with the ark. What is all this but our Lord's teaching to the woman of Samaria, and the absence of a sanctuary from the New Jerusalem—everywhere Immanuel? Then we have Isaiah's abounding prophecies of these things, the Psalms with their trumpet-call to all lands, the seed of Abraham blessing the nations, nay, the primal promise of bruising the serpent's head—the wonder is that there could ever have been a mistake. These old prophets saw there was something in their faith and worship, different in kind from the local idolatries of other nations, something which had in it the germ of catholicity. St. John had touched and handled the stem which grew from that germ, and he knew that it must grow till it filled the earth. 4. St. John paints an ideal; and ideals are never realised completely in this world. But what would the world have been without them? Here in England, what has been, deep down beneath the vulgar strife of parties, the ground of our Constitution in Church and State? What but the walking of our nation amidst the light of the holy city, and our kings bringing their glory into it? (*J. Foxley, M.A.*) Of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.—*Three aspects of revelation*.—Some apply these three expressions to the three portions of Holy Writ, of which John was the inspired penman. The word of God, they refer to the gospel; the testimony of Jesus, to the epistles; and the things which he saw, to the Book of Revelation. But they rather seem to refer to the subject of all these sacred writings. I. "THE WORD OF GOD" is His personal, essential, and eternal Word—His only-begotten Son. John bare record of Him in the gospel, in the epistles, and in the Book of Revelation. Or the Word of God is His written Word, the glorious doctrines of Divine revelation. This is the meaning of the Word of God in ver. 9; chaps. vi. 9, xii. 11, xx. 4. II. "THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" is the glorious gospel of the blessed God. 1. The gospel is called the testimony of Jesus, because He is the author of it, equally with the Father. He is the faithful witness, revealing the character, the counsels, and the will of God. 2. Because He is the subject of it. The Spirit of Christ testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed. 3. Because He is the object of it. To Him gave all the prophets witness. The holy apostles were His inspired witnesses. 4. Because He was the recipient of this testimony (John v. 19, 20, vii. 16, viii. 28, xii. 49, xiv. 10, xvii. 7; Matt. xi. 27). III. OF ALL THINGS THAT HE SAW. (*Jas. Young.*) Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear.—*The seven "blesseds" in the Revelation*.—There are seven benedictions in the Book of Revelation. Seven is said to be the number of completeness or perfection. The first of these benedictions occurs in the opening lines of John's Apocalypse: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep," &c. Just at the close of the Apocalypse is another similar passage: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." These two verses are like the golden clasps—one on either lid—that hold together a dear old family Bible. The next benediction is pronounced upon the gospel-guests:

"Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb." They who are drawn by the attraction of the Cross, and yield to that drawing, are renewed by the Holy Spirit. Theirs is a place at the celestial banquet. How careful should every disciple be to walk unspotted from the world, for every stain looks ugly upon a white ground. There is a hint as to the method of keeping thus clean, which is given in the third benediction: "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." No believer can preserve the purity of his character without prayerful vigilance. "Watch." And one reason for this watchfulness is that Christ's coming is to be as unannounced as the midnight visit of a burglar. Old Dr. Alexander used to say with solemn tenderness, "I won't answer for any Christian who dies while in an awful state of backsliding." Upon the gospel-doers rests the sweet approval of the fourth benediction. It is the blessing upon those "that do His commandments." The evidence and the joy of discipleship both lie in obedience to Christ. This is what the world has a right to demand from us—a religion of fruits. God will judge every one of us according to our works. The next blessing is that angelic voice that floats over the resting-place of the pious dead. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." To them the perils of the voyage are over. They have cast anchor in the haven. They are safe. About the last one of the benedictions in this sublime book there has been no little controversy: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." It is enough for me that, if I fall to sleep in Jesus I shall awake with Him. There is not an unmarked grave in all Christ's household of the slumberers. Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring together with Him. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Reading the Revelation*:—A scholar of singular simplicity and holiness of life was asked by a friend at the University, why he so often read the Book of the Revelation. The answer savoured of great humility and simple faith. He turned to this verse, "Blessed is he that readeth," &c. Bengel, with his usual sagacity, in his commentary on these words rebukes men for their neglect of this great book, reversing the promise, as if it were written, "Blessed is he that readeth not!" The very title "Revelation" should, he says, quicken our interest, and provoke our desire to look in and see those things which are revealed; whereas too many pass by the uplifted veil with eyes averted, and lips closed, as if silence were wisdom, and indifference a sign of reverential fear. But let them take heed, he says, lest, while they devise all manner of excuse for refusing the heavenly gift, they weary God as did Ahaz, when in pretended modesty he would ask no sign of Him; lest also they be found ungrateful to Jesus Christ. (*Canon Furse.*) *The Apocalypse to be read*:—What if there be a veil laid over this Revelation, will it not be rarified by reading, and by degrees wholly worn away? (*J. Trapp.*) *The words of this prophecy.—Prophecy, though difficult to understand, must yet be studied*:—When Professor Stuart, one of the greatest biblical authorities, was asked one time by his scholars to explain this book to them, he told them he wouldn't till he understood it. Now, if you wait till you understand every stone, rivulet, tree, bush, and blade of grass in a picture it will be a long time before you admire it. And so with our food. If you wait to analyse every kind of edible on the table it will be a long while indeed before you enjoy it. Because we can't understand every thought, word, and picture in the Book of Revelation is no reason why we should not give our attention to what we can understand in it. (*H. A. Buttz.*) *And keep those things which are written therein.—Keeping the Word of God*:—1. To keep those things is to believe them. Faith must be mixed with the hearing of the gospel; we cannot keep those things unless we believe them. 2. To keep those things is to remember, ponder, keep them in mind (Luke ii. 19, 51). We are saved by the gospel, if we keep it in memory. We must remember God's name, His wonderful works, His holy Word, and His precious promises. 3. To keep those things is to observe or obey them; to be doers of the Word and not hearers only; to resemble, embody, and exhibit the holy Word of God in living characters in the life and conversation. 4. To keep those things is to hold them fast; to hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end; to take heed lest at any time we should let them slip; lest there be in us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; lest we should draw back unto perdition. 5. To keep those things is to make progress in holiness, to go on from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from glory to glory, till every one appears in Zion before God. (*Jas. Young.*)

Vers. 4-9. *John to the seven Churches . . . in Asia.—The dedication*:—I. The WRITER of this book is again named—"John." The things he was now about to relate

depended upon his own testimony. He therefore mentions his name once, and again, and yet a third time. He refers to his former writings for his credibility as an inspired historian, and relates circumstantially the occasion upon which this revelation was given him. "I, John," he says in ver. 9, "I am the person to whom these disclosures were made, by whose hand they were written down, and am open to the examination of the most sceptical inquirer." II. The PERSONS to whom he dedicates this book: "To the seven Churches," &c. It is dedicated to them particularly, partly because they were more immediately under this apostle's care, and partly because they were suffering from the same persecution with himself, and most needed the consolations which the views here given of the final triumph of the Church of Christ were calculated to impart. III. The SALUTATION. "Grace be unto you and peace." The origin of our salvation is grace, the effect peace. In proportion as we perceive the grace, we have peace. First grace, then peace. Both are from God. We are reminded here of their threefold source. The Father is first mentioned as of unchanging form, who has never appeared under any other aspect than that of the Supreme Being, "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." Next we have the Spirit under a divided form, as illustrative of the variety and diffusion, and also of the limitation of His influences; and here we have the Son in the distinguishing characteristics of His mission, "and from Jesus Christ who is the Faithful Witness and the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Thus all the persons of the Godhead are mentioned as constituting the well-spring of grace and peace to the Church. Nor is there any saving grace, nor is there any permanent peace, that does not flow from each and all of these. IV. This dedication includes AN ASCRIPTION OF PRAISE TO THE REDEEMER: "Unto Him that loved us," &c. V. This is followed by a reference to THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. "Behold He cometh with clouds," &c. VI. This is further confirmed, by AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM CHRIST Himself, of His proper Divinity. "I am Alpha and Omega," &c. To the foregoing truths Christ affixes this as His signature. VII. This dedication closes with a STATEMENT OF THE TIME and place in which this revelation was given. "I, John, who also am your brother," &c. We need only observe here the humble and affectionate manner in which, though an aged apostle and favoured with these revelations, he speaks of his station amongst other Christians. He is not exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations. He speaks not of anything in which he was superior, but of that only in which he was upon an equality with them. He calls not himself a companion of Christ and of His apostles, but their "companion in tribulation." He does not address them as their diocesan, or father in God, but as their "brother." The humility of the apostles, it is to be feared, as well as their dignity, died with them. This "I, John," which is repeated in the last chapter, yet stands out as on the borderland of that primitive simplicity which the Church has yet many steps to retrace before she regains. (*G. Rogers.*) Grace be unto you, and peace.—*The gifts of Christ as Witness, risen and crowned*:—I. Grace and peace from THE FAITHFUL WITNESS. But where did John get this word? From the lips of the Master, who began His career with these words (John iii. 11); and who all but ended it with these royal words (John xviii. 37). Christ Himself, then, claimed to be in an eminent and special sense the witness to the world. What was the substance of His testimony? It was a testimony mainly about God. It is one thing to speak about God in words, maxims, precepts; it is another thing to show us God in act and life. The one is theology, the other is gospel. It is not Christ's words only that make Him the "Amen," the "faithful and true Witness," but it is all His deeds of grace and truth and pity; all His yearnings over wickedness and sorrow; all His drawings of the profligate and the outcast to Himself, His life of loneliness, His death of shame. The substance of His testimony is the name, the revelation of the character of His Father and our Father. This name of "witness" bears likewise strongly upon the remarkable manner of our Lord's testimony. The task of a witness is to tell his story, not to argue about it. And there is nothing more characteristic of our Lord's words than the way in which, without attempt of proof, He makes them stand on their own evidence, or rather depend upon His veracity. And now, ask yourselves, is there not grace and peace brought to us all from that faithful Witness, and from His credible testimony? Surely the one thing that the world wants is to have the question answered whether there really is a God in heaven that cares anything about me, and to whom I can trust myself wholly; believing that He will lift me out of all my meannesses and sins, and make me pure and blessed like Himself. Surely that is the deepest of all human needs, howsoever

little men may know it. And sure I am that none of us can find the certitude of such a Father unless we give credence to the message of Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. Grace and peace from THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH. "The First begotten from the dead" does not precisely convey the idea of the original, which would be more accurately represented by "The First born from the dead"—the resurrection being looked upon as a kind of birth into a higher order of life. And how is it that grace and peace come to us from the risen Witness? Think first how the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the confirmation of His testimony. In it the Father, to whom He had borne witness in His life and death, bears witness to Christ, that His claims were true and His work well-pleasing. He is "declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead." Strike away the resurrection and you fatally damage the witness of Jesus. If Christ be not risen our preaching and your faith are alike vain; ye are yet in your sins. Grace and peace come from faith in the "First begotten from the dead." And that is true in another aspect. Faith in the resurrection gives us a living Lord to confide in, not a dead one, whose work we may look back upon with thankfulness, but a living one, whose work is with us, and by whose true companionship and real affection, strength and help are granted to us every day. In still another way do grace and peace flow to us, from the "First begotten from the dead," inasmuch as in His resurrection life we are armed for victory over that foe whom He has conquered. If He be the Firstborn, He will have "many brethren."

III. Grace and peace from THE KING OF KINGS. The series of aspects of Christ's work here is ranged in order of time, in so far as the second follows the first, and the third flows from both, though we are not to suppose that our Lord has ceased to be the faithful Witness when He has ascended His sovereign throne. His own saying, "I have declared Thy name, and will declare it," shows us that His witness is perpetual, and carried on from His seat at the right hand of God. He is the "Prince of the kings of the earth" just because He is "the faithful Witness." A kingdom over heart and conscience, will and spirit, is the kingdom which Christ has founded, and His rule rests upon His witness. And not only so, He is "the Prince of the kings of the earth" because in that witness He became, as the word etymologically conveys both ideas, a martyr. His first regal title was written upon His Cross, and on the Cross it ever stands. He is the King because He is the Sacrifice. And He is the Prince of the kings of the earth because, witnessing and slain, He has risen again; His resurrection has been the step midway, as it were, between the humiliation of earth and death, and the loftiness of the throne. By it He has climbed to His place at the right hand of God. He is King and Prince, then, by right of truth, love, sacrifice, death, resurrection. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

*A ministerial salutation and a sublime doxology:—*I. A MINISTERIAL SALUTATION. 1. It was given by an old minister to Churches with whom he was formerly acquainted. It is well for ministers to communicate the experience of their higher moments of spiritual enjoyment to their congregations. Pastors should never forget the old churches from which they have removed. They should always be ready to write to them a holy salutation. 2. It evokes the highest moral blessing to rest upon the Asiatic Churches. (1) All Christian Churches need Divine grace, to inspire with humility, to strengthen in trial, and to quicken in energy. (2) All Christian Churches need peace, that sympathy may extend from member to member, that moral progress may be constant, and that the world may have a pattern of holy unity. God only can impart these heavenly blessings. 3. It mentions the Divine Being under the grandest appellations. (1) Indicative of eternity, "Which is, and which was, and which is to come." (2) Indicative of dignity. "And from the Seven Spirits." (3) Indicative of fidelity. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness." During the period of His Incarnation Christ was a faithful witness. He was a faithful witness of His Father. He was faithful to the Jews; before Pilate; to humanity. He sealed His testimony with His death. (4) Indicative of royalty. "The Prince of the kings of the earth." Rendered supreme, not by the victory of an earthly conquest, but by the right of eternal Godhead. II. A SUBLIME DOXOLOGY. 1. Inspired by a glad remembrance of the Divine love. "Unto Him that loved us." Ministers ought to delight to dwell on the love of God. If they did, it would frequently awaken a loving song within them. It would also have a glad effect upon their congregations. 2. Celebrating the Divine and sweet renewal of the soul. "And washed us from our sins." The love of Christ, and the renewal of the moral nature, should go together, not merely in the pages of a book, but also in the actual experiences of the soul. He can wash us from our sins, and give purity, freedom, and peace in their stead. What process of cleansing so

marvellous, so healthful, and heavenly as this! 3. Mentioning the exalted position to which Christian manhood is raised in Christ. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God." (1) The Christian is a king. He rules himself; his thoughts, affections, and passions. He rules others by the sublime influence of patience and faith. (2) The Christian is a priest. He offers sacrifices to God, the sacrifice of himself, which is reasonable and acceptable; the sacrifice of his prayer, praise, and service. He also makes intercession for others. 4. Concluding with a devout ascription of praise to Christ. "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Christ has "glory." The glory of Divinity; of heavenly praise; of terrestrial worship; of moral conquest; of unbounded moral influence. Christ has "dominion"; dominion over the material universe; over a growing empire of souls; by right of nature rather than by right of birth. Both His glory and dominion are eternal. Both should be celebrated in the anthems of the Church, as they are glad reasons for human, as well as angelic, joy. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Grace.—1. A world of grace surrounds us. 2. A time of grace lies back of us. 3. A hope of eternal grace opens up before us. (*B. Hoffmann.*)

From Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.—*The proper object of all religious worship* is the living and true God. 1. Divine worship must be presented to God, essentially considered, as possessing all those Divine perfections which form a proper object of contemplation, praise, and adoration; and a proper ground of hope and holy confidence. 2. Worship must be addressed to God, personally considered, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as possessing all those personal characters that form a ground of confidence, love, and adoration. 3. Worship must be given to God, graciously considered, as possessing all those covenant and gracious excellences that form a ground of hope and everlasting consolation in all our approaches to the throne of grace. Such is the character recognised by the apostle in the prayer before us. The words imply the existence of three Divine persons in the adorable Trinity, and they apply equally to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. They are also expressive of His adorable sovereignty, as the Ruler, the Lawgiver, and the Judge of the universe. They suppose the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and grace, to be under His power; and they also teach the eternity of that kingdom. (*Jas. Young.*)

Christ for ever.—We speak of time as past, present, and future; but what a mystery it is! The present moment is all of time that actually exists. All past time ends in the present moment. All future time begins in the same point. To use the experience of the past so as to shape the future aright is to redeem the time. This gives to every moment of time a tremendous importance. It makes the thought of it the most practical of all things. It is from this extremely practical point of view that I wish to look at this otherwise most abstruse of subjects. I wish to look at Christ's relation to time, in order to determine our own relation to it. He is here spoken of under the aspect of a past, a present, and a future Christ. The relations of Jesus Christ to time span the whole of time. They are commensurate with the whole purpose of God in time. It is only as our lives run into the line of Christ's life, as stretching through all time, that we can be saved. The life that flies off at a tangent from that line, or that crosses, contradicts, or reverses it, is a lost life. I.

THE CHRIST OF THE PAST. It is very evident to a spiritual reader of the Bible that Christ runs through the whole of it, from the beginning to the end. But what I want specially to notice here is that the Christ of the past represents three great facts that are for ever settled and done. First, that one, and only one, perfect human life has been lived in the world; second, that one, and only one, atoning death has been died in the world; and third, that one, and only one Person, in virtue of the life He lived and the death He died, is the conqueror of sin and death. Those are facts that belong to the past history of this world. They are eternally consummated and complete. Moreover, they are thoroughly well authenticated facts; and it is not easy to see how there can be any real justification of doubt concerning them. You cannot separate the one from the other. You must believe in a whole Christ or not at all. What the age wants is not a diluted Christ—not a mere spectre of Christianity, or ghost of morality, but a whole Christ. II.

THE CHRIST OF THE PRESENT. Christianity is much impeded by the want of progress in the Church. There is not that growth and robustness in our modern Christianity which there ought to be. Why has Christ not remained the Christ of the past alone? Why has He not remained in the grave? Why is He at the right hand of God in heaven—at the very goal of the ages? Because He would not have His people live in the past. He is the Christ of the present, to be with His people to-day, to lead them on

to far higher things than they have yet realised. The present ought to be full of Christ. For what does this belief in a living Redeemer imply? It implies three things: First, that in Christ, as seated on the right hand of God in heaven, we have an actual Person in whom might and right are absolutely one. Further, this Christ who exists to-day in the face of all the tyrannies and inequalities of the world, as the absolute embodiment of might and right, is not sitting aloft in heaven in passive contemplation of the conflict here. He is actually ruling over all worlds for the accomplishment of a Divine purpose. There is a third idea here belonging to the Christ of the present. Believing in Him as the actual embodiment of might and right, and as that One who is ruling over all things for the accomplishment of a Divine purpose, we are called upon to co-operate with Him in the present, and we have the promise that just as we intelligently do so will we receive of the power of the Spirit to enable us to do the work to which we are called. He rules in heaven to shed down power upon His people. He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and holds the seven stars in His right hand. III. THE CHRIST OF THE FUTURE. What, then, are the certainties in connection with the Christ of the future in which we are called to believe? There is, first of all, the certainty that the Word and Spirit of Christ will prevail throughout the whole earth. There are tremendous obstacles to be overcome. There are false principles at work everywhere in human society. There is scepticism of first principles altogether. There are the disintegrating forces of a shallow and self-elated criticism. And beyond all these there are the dense masses of pure heathenism. But in view of what we have already considered, we cannot possibly have one atom of doubt as to the result. Who can doubt what the future will be? It must be the legitimate sequel of the things which, in the name of God, have been accomplished in the past, and are being wrought out and applied in the present. Having once got an intelligent hold of these things, we can no more doubt them than we can doubt our own existence. But it follows also that the Christ of the future is that One whom we have individually and personally to meet. There is just one other thought lying in the Christ of the future, and that is the relation that is destined to exist for ever between Christ and His own people—the relation of the heavenly Bridegroom to His bride, the Church. In that sublime relationship we have the consummation of felicity. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) The seven spirits.—Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, are here ascribed to the seven spirits which are before the throne. 1. They are called seven spirits symbolically. The number seven is the symbol of blessedness. He sanctified the seventh day; He made it a holy day. The number seven is the symbol of holiness. He rested on the seventh day; He made it a day of sacred repose. The number seven is the symbol of rest. He rested and was refreshed on the seventh day, because His work was finished. The number seven is the symbol of perfection. 2. They are called seven spirits typically, in allusion to the typical use of the number seven in the law of Moses and in the Old Testament. 3. They are called seven spirits prophetically. We find the sevenfold spirit described in prophecy as resting upon Christ (*Isa. xi. 2*). And we find a sevenfold effect of the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit described by the prophet Isaiah (*Isa. lxi. 1-3*). 4. They are called the seven spirits emblematically. The seven lamps and the seven eyes (*Zech. iv. 2, 10*), are explained to be the spirit (*vers. 6, 7*). The seven lamps are applied in the same sense in *Rev. iv. and v.*; and the seven eyes are explained in this sense in *chaps. v. and vi.*, all of which refer to the Spirit of God. 5. They are called the seven spirits officially (*1 Cor. xii. 4-11; Zech. xii. 10*). 6. They are called the seven spirits relatively, in reference to the symbolical number seven applied to the Churches. As there are seven Churches, so there are seven spirits. The number of the one corresponds with the number of the other. The fulness of the Spirit is commensurate with the necessities of the Church. But amid this variety there is still a blessed unity. As the seven Churches are the symbol of the one Church of Christ, so the seven spirits are the symbol of the one Divine Spirit. (*Jas. Young*.) Jesus Christ . . . the faithful witness.—*The trustworthiness of Jesus Christ*:—Those who do not regard Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, find themselves at once placed in a difficulty, by the very attitude which He assumes toward mankind in this respect. The Bible abounds with the very strongest denunciations against the sin of trusting anybody else but God. The ancient law pronounced a distinct curse upon any man who fell into this sin. The Psalmist exhorts us not to allow ourselves to be drawn into it (*see Jer. xvii. 5, 6*). Now, if our blessed Lord laid Himself out to induce, on the part of His contemporaries, a moral attitude

towards Himself, which was incompatible with the direct law of God, He was not a good man, but an impostor. Christ was either the Son of God, or else, from first to last, throughout the whole course of His ministry, He allowed persons to fix upon Him a confidence which they ought not to have reposed upon any person—whatever his pretensions—unless that person were God Himself. Nay, it is not merely that He permitted His people to trust Him; but He actually held Himself forward as an object of faith. He positively demanded faith in Himself before He would comply with the entreaties of those that approached Him. Still more emphatic is the position which He occupies in the moral world. He represents Himself as the object of the sinner's confidence. "As Moses lifted up the serpent," &c. What blasphemy if He be not the Son of God! I venture to say that the man who fixes the eye of intelligent faith upon the dying Son of Man, if Christ be not the Son of God, is guilty of idolatry, and the blighting curse of the prophet will rest upon him: "That man shall be like the heath in the desert, he shall not see when good cometh." I marvel greatly, then, if Christ be not the Son of God, why these results do not follow. How comes it to pass that those who trust Him most fervently, are not the most shrivelled beings on the face of God's earth? I said I was to speak to you about Christ's trustworthiness. There is this great truth that underlies it all; but I want to point out other considerations that lead us in the same direction, in order that our faith may be strengthened. First, He gathered around Him a little band of followers, and asked them to do a good deal. Their fishing boats and nets, to be sure, were not very valuable property; but then, remember, these were all they had. What authority had they to make such a tremendous sacrifice? Simply the bare word of a Stranger, who says, "Follow Me." Very well, did He prove Himself trustworthy? They wandered about with Him many a weary night; sometimes their commissariat was very slender indeed; yet, somehow, they never wanted; "the five barley loaves" managed to supply the wants of all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus. "Jesus Christ is the same to-day." In our outward circumstances, how many are there of us that make proof of it? How many are there of us who pass through difficulty and trial, and sometimes have been sore straitened, and yet the Lord has met our wants! He has fulfilled His promise. Is that all? No; by no means. From beginning to end of our Lord's blessed ministry, He was continually being approached by the children of want and misery. Now observe—from the nobleman at Capernaum to the dying thief on the cross of Calvary, the very first thing He demanded of them was confidence; and we do not read of one single case where that confidence was ill reposed. There were plenty of enemies who would have been glad to point to such cases. Contemporary history says nothing about them. The Jews have left no contradiction of the glorious facts which our blessed Lord actually achieved: the cases where He failed remain unknown, and will for ever remain unknown, because they never existed. All this leads up to the conclusion that the Lord Jesus Christ was pre-eminently a trustworthy Person. But now, one step further. If He was trustworthy in these minor details of His daily life, does it not seem reasonable to conclude that He would also be trustworthy in the great work which He came into the world specially to perform? "Well," you say, "it was a greater work than any of the rest." So it was. "It entailed a great deal more moral power." Yes, a great deal more. "It involved vaster mysteries." Yes; all true. Set against that, however, another consideration. We shall readily admit that God must have known the nature of the work; He must have foreseen its difficulties, understood its condition. Now, there was only one Person God could have trusted with the work—His own eternal Word, co-eternal with Himself—One with Himself for ever—He could afford to trust Him. Now then, if God could trust Him with this work, I think we may trust Him with it. The passage of Scripture which I have brought before you, represents Him as "the faithful Witness, the First begotten of the dead." He stands before us as the risen Christ, and the question naturally arises, Is His character different now from what it was when He lived here on earth, 1800 years ago? Well, it seems only reasonable to suppose that the words of the risen Saviour will be even more trustworthy, if possible, than the words of a living Saviour. As the Son of God, He knew all about eternity from all eternity; but, as the Son of Man, He had to make that long, long voyage into that unknown region which lies beyond the stream of death. He has returned from His journey, and He stands before His disciples in the fulness of resurrection-life as "The Trustworthy." If He was trustworthy when He lived, surely He is no less trustworthy now. Lo! the risen Jesus stands before you. His very life

witnesses to something. The fact that He is "raised from the dead to die no more" witnesses to something. What does it witness to? The very first words He utters, set my doubt at rest. He speaks of "My Father and your Father, My God and your God." What? Has a risen Christ borne faithful witness to me, that there is now established between fallen man and a holy God this blessed relationship, so that I may look up and say, "Father!" and that I may know that He looks down and says "Son!" What were His first words to the disciples, as they gathered together in fear and trembling? He stands in their midst, and says, "Peace be unto you." Is it true? The risen Christ says so: "the faithful Witness" says so. It is true; because it is witnessed to by a risen Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ stands before us as "the First begotten of the dead," and as "the faithful Witness." (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *Jesus His own witness*:—The twofold proposition we offer for your acceptance is this: Jesus Christ was not a product of the age in which He lived, but a native of another world who came to this world for a purpose; that He was God and man in one person. The geologist, finding a stone where there was no other stone like it, reasonably concluded that it was imported. A Chinaman walking down the streets of Shanghai meets an American missionary. The missionary is a man like himself, but in dress, language, and religion is totally different. A foolish man, that Chinaman, if he does not conclude that he has met a foreigner. Now Jesus Christ was a man like other men, and yet so different from all other men that we are justified in believing that He is more than man and not a native of this world at all. Our first proof of this proposition is Jesus Christ Himself, in His claims, His character, and His works. He claimed that He was the Son of Man. His claim was not that He was a son of man, nor the son of a man, but *the* Son of Man, of all men, of the human race, of humanity. His was a life world-wide. His was a heart pulsating with the blood of the human race. He reckoned for His ancestry the collective myriads of mankind. Now, was there anything in the environments of Christ to make out of Him such a world-wide Son of Man? Just the contrary. He lived in a mountain village, and village life tends to make men narrow. Travel may correct this tendency, but He did not travel out of Palestine. Born of the tribe of Judah, and having a legal right to the throne of David, we would naturally expect Him to share the narrow, bitter feeling of His Jewish kindred, and, like them, chafe under the loss of national glory. On the other hand, He shares none of their narrow feelings. He teaches them a lesson of brotherly love by condemning their priest and Levite for passing by on the other side, while He praises the hated Samaritan who stops and helps the wounded man. All through His life there was a conflict between His universal sympathy and the narrow bigotry of His people. The forces at work at that time did not produce such a man. He evidently brought into the world this new idea, which we find through Revelation to be native of the world from which He came. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. He was not a Son of God, but the Son of God. It was evident that His friends and enemies understood Him as claiming that in being the Son of God He was God. In many places He claims attributes which none but God can possess. There are some, however, who demand more evidence than a mere claim. They wish to know the basis on which the claim rests. Let me say to such there are but three positions we can hold with reference to Christ. None but a God, a madman, or a deceiver could have made the claims that He did. The charge that He was a madman no one is foolish enough to defend. Then He was either God or the worst of men. A good man cannot claim to be what he is not. Nor does any one at this day claim that Jesus was a deceiver. There is no middle ground. The very thought shocks the conscience of one who is at all familiar with His character. If, then, there be none foolish enough to claim that He was a madman, or bad enough to assert that He was a bad man, surely the verdict that He was good is universal; and if good He was God. (*A. C. Dixon.*) *The resources of Christianity*:—It is no little war which Christianity is waging. 1. Christianity possesses the resource of the truth. Jesus Christ is the "faithful Witness." A faithful witness is one who utters the truth. And truth is something conquering and eternal. 2. Christianity possesses the resource of the truth substantiated. Christ staked everything upon the Resurrection. But the fact of the resurrection stands. So Christianity stands with it. 3. Christianity possesses the resource of a present Divine power. The pierced hand is on the helm of all things. 4. Christianity possesses the resource of a sacrificial Divine love. It is from the Cross that Christ appeals to men. Such appeal must be irresistible.

LESSONS—1. Of courage. The Christian is on the winning side of things. 2. Of wise prudence. He who opposes Christ must go down before Him. Is it not best to make alliance with the Conquering One? (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*) *Views of Christ*:—We have Christ here in three aspects—I. IN RELATION TO TRUTH. "He is a witness." What is truth? Reality. Christ came to bear witness of the reality of realities. As a witness of God. Christ was a competent witness—1. Intellectually competent. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten of the Father." He alone knew the Absolute. 2. Morally competent. He had no motive to misrepresent Him. You must be pure to represent purity, just to represent justice, loving to represent love. II. IN RELATION TO IMMORTALITY. "First begotten of the dead." How was He first begotten of the dead? Did not Lazarus rise from the grave? Not in time, but in importance. 1. He rose by His own power. No one else ever did. 2. He rose as the representative of risen saints. III. IN RELATION TO EMPIRE. "The Prince of the kings of the earth." "All power is given unto Him." (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ as Mediator*:—I. CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL TITLES. 1. Christ is invested with prophetic order. As a prophet He is "faithful." He shed the true light on the momentous questions. 2. Christ is invested with priestly order. He was the first who rose from death to immortality. He entered heaven with His own blood, to appear before His Father to intercede for the salvation of all who would believe on His name. 3. Christ is invested with kingly order. II. CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL WORK. 1. The original cause of the work. "He loved us." 2. The efficacy of the work. "Washed us." 3. The end attained by the work. "Hath made us kings and priests." III. CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL GLORY. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen. "Glory and might." 1. It is personally addressed—"unto Him." 2. It is constantly felt—"unto Him that loved us." 3. It is everlastingly due—"for ever and ever." 4. It is universally approved—"Amen." (*Homilist.*) *A threefold description of Christ*:—First, from His prophetic; secondly, from His priestly; thirdly, from His regal. We begin with the prophetic office of Christ, expressed in these words, wherein Jesus Christ is said to be the faithful witness. First, it is the witness. Christ is a witness, and He is a special and singular witness, so as there is none else besides that in this particular is like unto Him (*Isa. lv. 4*). First, by way of discovery and revelation, as making known to us the will of His Father (*Matt. xi. 27; John i. 18*). There were two ways wherein Christ did make known unto us the gospel, and the will of His Father. First, in His own person (*Isa. lxi. 1, &c.*) Second, He did it also, and still does in His servants, who were sent and appointed by Him (*1 Pet. i. 10, 11*). Third, by way of assurance and confirmation, not only so far forth as He reveals to us those things which we knew not; but also as He does further settle us in these things which we know; He is a witness in this respect likewise. And that by virtue of His Spirit that dwelleth in us (*2 Cor. ii. 10*). Now there are two things which Christ by His Spirit doth thus witness to all those that are members of Him. First, the truths and doctrines of Christianity; and second, their own spiritual condition and state in grace, as having such truths belonging to them. The second is, the faithful. Christ is not only a witness but a faithful witness, which is the chief commendation of a witness. This faithfulness of Christ in point of testimony may be explained in three particulars. First, in the veracity of it. Christ is a faithful witness, because He witnesses nothing but that which is indeed truth. Second, from the universality of it. Christ's faithfulness is seen, not only in delivering the truth, but the whole truth. And as without reservation, so without addition likewise; that which the Father commits unto Him to be declared, that alone does Christ declare. Third, His faithfulness is seen in His sincerity in all this, in that herein He seeks not His own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him (*John vii. 18*). The consideration of this point thus explained may have a suitable influence upon ourselves in a way of application. First, as a special argument to us to believe what is propounded by Christ. Faithfulness on Christ's part calls for faith on ours; and His witnessing, it calls for our assent. Let us hold upon Christ's faithfulness by trusting perfectly to the grace which is revealed. Second, as for promises, so for threatenings; He is the faithful witness here likewise. A second use of this point may be to acquaint us with the blessed estate of the servants of God. Those that are true members of Christ are happy persons, because He is a faithful witness. Whatever they have at present here below they have much in reversion and expectation; and that because they have an interest in Christ, who will be sure not to fail them. Third, seeing Christ is a faithful witness it should teach us also conformity to Christ in this particular, whether

ministers or other Christians. The second is taken from His priestly, in these, "And the first begotten of the dead." The principal actions of Christ's priesthood consist in two particulars—the one is in dying for us, and the other in rising again from the dead, and making intercession for us. First, Christ was once dead. This is one thing which is here implied (1 Cor. xv. 3). The death of Christ is a special article of our Christian faith. Second, He rose again from the dead; He was begotten among the dead, that is, He was raised from death to life. And this the Scripture also mentions to be profitable to us, both in point of justification, and in point of sanctification likewise (Rom. iv. 25; the latter in Rom. vi. 4). Third, Christ was the first begotten of the dead (Col. i. 18). Christ was said to be the first begotten of the dead, in point of order, as being first in the glorious Resurrection. Therefore He is called the first-fruits of them that sleep (1 Cor. xv. 20). Christ is before any other in this particular. And this again in a twofold respect. First, as to the principle of His resurrection; and secondly, as to the terms of it. Though Lazarus and some others rose from the dead before Christ, yet they rose from natural death to natural life, and so as to die again; but Christ so rose as never more to die (Rom. vi. 9). Thus now Christ is the first begotten of the dead, in point of order. The second is in point of influence; so far forth as Christ's resurrection was operative and efficacious to ours; by way of merit, by way of efficiency, and by way of pattern or example. Again, He is said to be the first begotten of the dead, in regard of that authority which He has over the dead, obtained by His rising again (Rom. xiv. 9). Christ was Lord of us before He rose again; but His resurrection put Him into the actual possession of this lordship, and was a clearer manifestation of it. This is a point of singular encouragement to God's children; and that especially against the fear of death, and the horror of the grave. There is an inseparable union betwixt Christ and every believer; and that not only in regard of their souls, but also of their bodies (1 Cor. vi. 15). And God has made a gracious covenant with them likewise in Christ, to be their God, even for ever and ever, and in death itself, which they shall at last be also raised up from, upon the account of Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. i. 3, 4). His regal, or kingly office. "And the Prince of kings of the earth." Christ is not only a prophet and a priest, but likewise a king (Acts v. 31). This Christ is said to be upon a twofold consideration. First, in reference to His nature. Second, in reference to His office. Thus He hath all power in heaven and earth committed unto Him (Matt. xxviii. 18). Now here He is said not only to be a prince absolutely, but relatively, the Prince of the kings of the earth, as showing both His influence upon them, and likewise their dependence upon Him. The consideration of this point is useful both to princes and people. First, it is useful to princes to teach them to look up to this great and mighty Prince of all, whom they thus stand in subjection unto. And second, it is useful to people in sundry regards likewise. First, to infer their obedience; and second, to regulate it. (*T. Horton, D.D.*)

The first begotten of the dead.—*The risen Christ the only revealer of immortality:*—Simple as these words are, it is perhaps impossible for us to understand how deep and blessed their meaning was to him who wrote them. Their brief sentence, beautiful in its brevity, must have formed his only strength against the powerful influences that tended to depress his faith. To that old man, gazing on the desolate sea, and thinking of that unseen and boundless ocean in which all things seemed to perish, every wave which broke on the shores of Patmos would seem to speak of the omnipotence of death, if there were no human Christ exalted above its power. But such a One there was. John saw Him, and His name was this—"the First Begotten of the dead." The name, "first begotten," implies that He, the first who rose, should lead the great armies of the sons of God to a conquest over death, thereby implying that He was the first who revealed to them the certain truth of their deathless destiny. John says, "He is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Between these three facts there is a fundamental connection. They teach us, then, that unless Christ had risen, His witness to God and His truth would have been imperfect and vain, and that on His rising stands His kingship over men. And if that be true, it is evident that unless we realise in our individual experience the meaning of "Christ, the first begotten of the dead," we can neither understand nor feel the power of the testimony which He bore to God. I. Let us inquire ON WHAT GROUNDS, APART FROM THOSE GIVEN BY THE RISEN REDEEMER, MAN COULD BUILD ANY BELIEF IN A DEATHLESS LIFE. Let us imagine that there is no Christ, and we shall find that every ground of belief will fail us.

1. We may grant at once that in hours of glad and hopeful feeling nature might

seem to suggest to man a life beyond the sleep of the grave, and that, for a time, he might think he believed it. But that is not a true test. To judge of the real personal value of such natural suggestions, we must test them in times of darkness, doubt, and sorrow. Do you think that then men can rise to faith on the strength of some dim and mystic hint which nature appears to convey—that, because she renews her life, man's life will rise from the tomb? No! The human spirit, startled at its own doubts, and anxiously panting for belief, can never build its faith in a thing so awfully glorious upon any emblems such as those. 2. Again, men have tried to find a proof of immortality by reasoning from the great law that God leaves none of His works unfinished. We admit that this argument is very strong. When taken in union with the truth of Christ, it seems to prove unanswerably the immortality of man. But we can, perhaps, show that, if there were no Christ, it would furnish no certain proof, but only indicate a probability. For, mark, it assumes that we can tell whether man's life is completed or not. I know God's works are never unfinished, but may not man's life have answered all its ends, though we see not how? The insect sports its life away during a summer morning; the "bird pipes his lone desire, and dies unheard amid his tree." And man, before God, is but an insect of a day; even compared with God's angels, he is an insignificant creature; and may not this strange life of ours have answered the purposes God designed? 3. Once more, men have appealed to the instincts of the human heart as pledges of immortality. These beliefs might afford convincing proofs but for two facts. The first is, that sin deadens aspiration, denies the Divine, and blots out the heavenly. Sin stifles those yearnings after the spiritual and eternal, which nothing finite can satisfy. The sinner's eye glances not beyond the visible. The second fact is, that by clothing all faith in a future with terror, sin tends to produce disbelief in it. II. WE PROCEED TO NOTE HOW CHRIST'S RISING IS THE GREAT REVELATION OF IMMORTALITY. 1. On the one hand, the fact of His rising reveals it to every man. No mere voice from the unseen world would satisfy man's heart. A real Son of God and of man must descend into the dark unknown, and come forth a conqueror. Man stood before the grave in doubt; the Christ rose, the doubt was gone. 2. The risen Christ reveals immortality in a still deeper sense to the Christian. Christ rose, and the man who is in Christ realises the resurrection now. With Christ he is dead to the old life, and is risen with Him into a new spiritual world. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) Unto Him that loved us.—*John's song of praise to Christ*:—It is not a song which John heard, but a song which welled up in John's heart. It is not a song which came down from heaven, but a song which ascended to heaven from earth. The very mention of the Saviour's name awakened in his heart the memory of His love. Here is the song of an exile. Here is the song of one who was solitary, without a heart to sympathise with him, or a voice to unite with him in his praises. It was in a loathsome dungeon that Bunyan followed the Pilgrim from the City of Destruction to the heavenly Jerusalem, and so mapped it out that it has imparted gladness to millions from that day to this. It was in the midst of sickness and when the victim of persecution, of which Judge Jeffreys was the appropriate instrument, that Baxter wrote his "Saint's Everlasting Rest," picturing by faith and hope, even from this world of sorrow, the depth of joy that remaineth for the people of God. And so here, this apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, banished to Patmos, "for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus," found Patmos a second Paradise. I. THE THEME WHICH AWAKENED HIS PRAISES WAS THE LOVE OF JESUS. It was this that even in Patmos made John sing this doxology of praise, and it is the great theme which pervades the whole of this book. 1. The Lord Jesus Himself had an irrepressible eagerness to speak of His love to His disciples. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." "As My Father loved Me, even so have I loved you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." 2. The revelation of the love of Christ was ever on the lips and ever on the pens of those sacred writers. "We love Him, because He first loved us." The apostle Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth us." The greatest prayer he offered for man was this, that they might be "rooted and grounded in love," and that they might "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God." 3. The love of the Lord Jesus, of which the apostle here speaks, was a love that was undeserved. This very apostle had seen what the love of Christ had cost Christ. This very apostle had heard such language as this from the lips of Jesus:

"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." He had heard Him say, "Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may also glorify Thee." He had heard Him say, "Now is My soul troubled. What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." He had stood by the very Cross, and had watched the long hours of agony and of death. 4. It was love which John realised for himself. It was not a sentimental thing with him. He could say, "I speak of that which I know, and testify of that which I have tasted." II. THE BLESSINGS WHICH THE APOSTLE CELEBRATES IN HIS SONG. 1. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." The apostle thought of his past state and his present state. He was a sinner, and he had been cleansed from sin. This separated his song from the songs of the angels in glory. Their song is a song of sympathy with the redeemed; but here is a song for sinners. It is this that makes it suitable for our lips. 2. "He has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." (J. J. Brown.) *John's first doxology*.—John had hardly begun to deliver his message to the seven Churches, he had hardly given in his name and stated from whom the message came, when he felt that he must lift up his heart in a joyful doxology. The very mention of the name of the Lord Jesus, the "faithful witness," &c., fired his heart. This text is just the upward burst of a great geyser of devotion. I. THE CONDITION OF HEART OUT OF WHICH OUTBURSTS OF ADORATION ARISE. 1. This man of doxologies, from whom praise flashes forth like light from the rising sun, is first of all a man who has realised the person of his Lord. The first word is, "Unto Him"; and then he must a second time before he has finished say, "To Him be glory and dominion." His Lord's person is evidently before his eye. He sees the actual Christ upon the throne. The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage, but who is far from being a living, present reality. Jesus was no abstraction to John; he loved Him too much for that. Love has a great vivifying power: it makes our impressions of those who are far away from us very lifelike, and brings them very near. John's great tender heart could not think of Christ as a cloudy conception; but he remembered Him as that blessed One with whom He had spoken, and on whose breast he had leaned. 2. John, in whom we notice the outburst of devotion, was a man firmly assured of his possession of the blessings for which he praised the Lord. Doubt has no outbursts; its chill breath freezes all things. Oh for more assurance! I would have you know beyond all doubt that Jesus is yours, so that you can say without hesitation, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." John was certain that he was loved, and he was furthermore most clear that he was washed, and therefore he poured forth his soul in praise. 3. John had also felt, and was feeling very strongly, his communion with all the saints. Notice his use of the plural pronoun. It is well for you and me to use this "us" very often. There are times when it is better to say "me," but in general let us get away to the "us"; for has not our Lord taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father which art in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; forgive us our trespasses," and so on? Our usual praises must be, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins." II. THE OUTBURST ITSELF. 1. It is a doxology, and as such does not stand alone: it is one of many. In the Book of the Revelation doxologies are frequent. If you begin praising God you are bound to go on. Praise is somewhat like an avalanche, which may begin with a snowflake on the mountain moved by the wing of a bird, but that flake binds others to itself and becomes a rolling ball: this rolling ball gathers more snow about it till it is huge, immense; it crashes through a forest. Thus praise may begin with the tear of gratitude; anon the bosom swells with love; thankfulness rises to a song; it breaks forth into a shout; it mounts up to join the everlasting hallelujahs which surround the throne of the Eternal. 2. This outburst carried within itself its own justification. Look at it closely, and you perceive the reasons why, in this enthusiastic manner, John adores his Saviour. The first is, "Unto Him that loved us." This love is in the present tense, for the passage may be read, "Unto Him that loveth us." Dwell on the present character of it, and be at this moment moved to holy praise. He loved us first before He washed us. Yes, He loved us so much that He washed us from our sins, black as they were. He did it effectually too: He did not try to wash us, but He actually and completely "washed us from our sins." The stains were deep; they seemed indelible, but He has "washed us from our sins." "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," has been realised by every believer. But think of how

He washed us—"in His own blood." Men are chary of their own blood, for it is their life; yet will brave ones pour it out for their country or for some worthy object; but Jesus shed His blood for such unworthy ones as we are, that He might by His atonement for ever put away the iniquity of His people. At what a cost was this cleansing provided! Nor is this all. The Lord that loved us would do nothing by halves, and therefore, when He washed us in His own blood, He "made us kings." We walk like kings among the sons of men, honoured before the Lord and His holy angels—the peerage of eternity. Our thoughts, our aims, our hopes, and our longings are all of a nobler kind than those of the mere carnal man. We read of the peculiar treasures of kings, and we have a choice wealth of grace. He has made us even now among the sons of men to possess the earth and to delight ourselves in the abundance of peace. Furthermore, our Lord has made us priests. The world is dumb, and we must speak for it. We are to be priests for all mankind. Oh, what dignity is this! Peter Martyr told Queen Elizabeth, "Kings and queens are more bound to obey God than any other persons: first, as God's creatures, and secondly, as His servants in office." This applies to us also. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's love to us in washing us from our sins*:—To Him that loved us: it is spoken in a manner exclusively, as if none did so much love us as Christ, as indeed there does not. The use of this point is to believe it, and to teach us to labour more and more to assure our hearts of it. We should endeavour to have the sense of this love of Christ more upon our souls, and to be well settled in it. Which was that which the apostle Paul did so much pray for (Eph. iii. 16, 17). This is discerned by such notes as are most proper to it. We may know that Christ hath loved us, according to that which He has done for us, and especially done in us, by changing our natures and by infusing of His graces into us. The second is from the manifestation of this affection in particular, in these words, "And hath washed us from our sins in His own blood." First, take it absolutely and in itself, as it is an expression of the privilege of believers, and that is to be washed from their sins by Christ's blood. The blood of Christ hath that efficacy with it as to cleanse from all sins (1 John i. 7). There is a double benefit from the blood of Christ—the one is the benefit of justification, as to the taking away of the guilt of sin; and the other is the benefit of sanctification, as to the taking away of the power and dominion. And each of these are here included in this expression. The improvement of this point to ourselves may be drawn forth into a various application. First, it may serve as a discovery to us of the grievous nature of sin, which had need of such a remedy as this to be used for the removal of it. Secondly, here is matter of encouragement also to the servants of God in all the upbraidings of conscience and of Satan setting in with it, that here is a remedy and help for them. Hence also we have ground of encouragement in our access to the throne of grace and hope of our entrance into heaven at last. Lastly, seeing we have so much benefit by the blood of Christ, we should in a special manner take heed of sinning against it. And so much may be spoken of this passage in its absolute consideration, as it is the expression of a Christian's privilege, which is to be washed from his sins in Christ's blood. Now, further, we may also look upon it relatively, and in connection with the words before, where it is said that He hath "loved us." And so it is an expression to us of Christ's affection. First, in His death itself He showed His love to us in that, and that is implied in His blood. It was not only the blood of His finger, but the blood of His heart, His very life went with it. Secondly, in the manner of His death there was His love also in that. And this likewise implied in the word "blood," which does denote some violence in it, a cruel and painful death (Col. i. 20; Phil. ii. 8). Thirdly, in the full and perfect application of this His death unto us. It is said "that He washed us in His own blood." He did not sprinkle us only, but bath us. He did give us a plentiful share and interest in it. And lastly, there is an emphasis also in the word of propriety, in that it is said "His own blood." The priests under the old Law, in the execution of their office, sprinkled the people with blood, and did in a sense and after a sort wash them from their sins in it. But that blood was not their own, but the blood of beasts. And this is a further enlargement of His love towards us. The use of all to ourselves is to enlarge our hearts in all thankfulness and acknowledgment to Christ for His goodness, which we should be very much quickened unto. And we should make it a ground of encouragement in the expectation of all things else from Christ which are necessary for us. He that has not stuck at this great expression of love will be sure not to stick to anything which is inferior to it; and He that has given us the greater will not stick to give us the

less. And so I have done also with the second general part of the text, which is the description of Christ from the particular discovery of His affection, "who hath washed us," &c. The third and last is from the effect and result of it in these words, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." Wherein there is a twofold dignity which believers do partake of from and with Christ. I. His kingly office; all true believers are kings. This is to be taken not in a temporal sense, but in a spiritual; and so the Scripture still expresses it (Luke xii. 32, xxii. 29). 1. For the state of grace. All true Christians, they are kings in this particular, namely, so far forth as they have power over their spiritual enemies, and all those things which might hinder their salvation. Thus is he a king in reference to the state of grace. 2. In reference to the state of glory also, so far forth as he is an heir of heaven, and shall reign with Christ for ever and ever. Thus he is a king in regard of right and title, even here in this life, though he be not in actual possession. II. His priesthood, "And hath made us priests," &c. 1. In regard of the prayers which are continually put up by them both for ourselves and others (1 Peter ii. 5). 2. As to the keeping of themselves from the pollutions and defilements of the world. The priests they were prohibited the touching of those things which were unclean. 3. As to the teaching and instructing of others in the communion of saints (Mal. ii. 7). And so should every Christian also in his way and within his compass (Gen. xviii. 19). 4. As to the offering up of themselves to God. And then the high priest especially, he entered into the *sanctum sanctorum*, so should every Christian have his heart always towards the Holy of Holies, &c. 5. The priests they still blessed the people; so would the mouths of Christians do others with whom they converse (1 Peter iii. 9). (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Christ and the soul*:—I. Christ is the **LOVER** of the soul. He loved it with—1. An absolutely disinterested love. 2. A practically self-sacrificing love. 3. An earnestly forgiving love. II. Christ is the **CLEANSER** of the soul. The grand mission and work of Christ are to put away sin from the soul. Sin is not so ingrained into the texture of the human soul that it cannot be removed; it can be washed out. III. Christ is the **ENNOBLER** of the soul. 1. Christ makes souls "kings." He enthrones the soul, gives it the sceptre of self-control, and enables it to make all things subservient to its own moral advancement. 2. Christ makes souls "priests." IV. Christ is the **HERO** of the soul. "To Him be glory," &c. Worship is not a service, but a spirit; is not obedience to a law, but the irrepressible instinct of a life. V. Christ is the **HOPE** of the soul. "Behold, He cometh," &c. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Loved and loved*:—1. **THE LOVE OF CHRIST**. 1. He loved us freely. He did not love us because we were righteous, because we had neither omitted any duty nor committed any offence. We are described in Scripture sometimes as crimson, and again as scarlet with sin. These are glaring colours, and sin is a glaring thing that must be seen. God has seen it; God abhors it. But though He saw it He loved us. 2. He loved us condescendingly. He loved us "and washed us." That God should create, I understand; that He should destroy, I also understand; but that He should wash and cleanse those who have made themselves foul with sin is marvellous. God is so full of power that, if a thing is broken, it is never worth His while to mend it. It is the poverty of our resources that compels us to put up with defiled and broken things and make them better. Yet He loved us, so that He stooped to wash us from our defilement. 3. He loved us in a holy manner. Even the Almighty could not make us happy and let us remain in sin. 4. He loved us at a costly rate; He hath washed us from our sins "in His own blood." 5. He loved us effectually. The text says that Christ "loved us and washed us from our sins," or "loosed us from our sins." 6. Once more, this love of Christ is perpetual. He loves us still. Turning to the Revised Version we read, "Unto Him that loveth us." He did not finish His love by His death. He loves you still, and He will always love you. II. **GLORIFY THIS LOVING, LIVING SAVIOUR**. 1. Gladly confess His name. "Then, I should have to bear a lot of ridicule," says one. And are you afraid to follow your Master for fear of ridicule? Remember what, for love of you, He bore. 2. Next, if we really do wish to glorify Him, we must shun all sin. A man cannot say, "Unto Him that loved me and washed me from my sins be glory," and then go and drink with the drunkard. You dare not say "Unto Him be glory," and then, as a professed Christian, go and do a dishonest deed, or speak a lie, or do that which would be discredit to yourself and would bring dishonour on His name. 3. Again, if we truly say, "To Him be glory and dominion," then we must give Him dominion over ourselves. Each man is a little empire of three kingdoms—

body, soul, and spirit—and it should be a united kingdom. Make Christ King of it all. 4. And then, next, if we say, “To Him be glory and dominion,” we must seek to bring others under His sway. There is some way in which every one of us can do it. Begin at home; do not be content till the boys and girls all belong to Christ. Then look after your neighbours. You that are large employers, care for the men who work for you. 5. If we really wish that Christ should have glory and dominion because He has washed us from our sins in His blood, we must do nothing to dishonour Him ourselves, and we shall do anything sooner than see His blessed gospel and His holy name dishonoured by others. 6. Unto Him that loved and lavied us let us give all glory and dominion; but if we would do that we must not be cold and indifferent about holy things. You know what kind of hearers some people are. You may say what you will to them, but they are never moved. They are so solid, so cold. Can I hear of that dear name and never catch the sacred fire? Can I think of Calvary and still my heart remain cold and chill? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Praise to Christ*:—I. WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR HIS PEOPLE. 1. He hath loved us. Can anything be more evident? He loved us from eternity. He foresaw our misery, and, moved with pity, provided for our relief. He loved us when we existed only in His eternal idea. What a love, reaching through eternal ages and undiminished! “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love.” “He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself.” All this from the infinite love of His nature; because He loved us. All that He hath done for His Church through ages are proofs of His love to you. By this merciful preservation of the Church the news of salvation has reached us. 2. He hath washed us from our sins in His own blood. 3. He honours us. “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.” II. THE RETURNS OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE WHICH HIS PEOPLE RENDER TO HIM. 1. To Him be glory. He has an essential glory as God. He is possessed of glory arising from His undertaking in behalf of sinful men—from His unparalleled condescension—glorious example—unreserved benevolence—patient submission—from His Cross—spoiling principalities and powers—making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it—conquest over death—glorious ascension. All this glory the believers see, with gladness, beaming on the crown of the Redeemer. The glory of the Saviour receives additional lustre from those offices which He so successfully fills for His people at the right hand of God. Is He an Advocate? How many causes has He gained! Is He a Priest? All the services of His people are rendered acceptable to God through Him. Is He an Intercessor? What innumerable benefits hath He obtained for them! Is He a Mediator? What hosts of enemies hath He reconciled to God, making them one in Him. Is He a Saviour? How complete and perfect His work, saving to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. Is He a Leader and Commander of the people? What glorious achievements and conquests have His people made through Him. But His people look forward with pleasing expectation to a period when the glories of their Saviour shall be abundantly increased, and shine forth in their greatest splendour. In the day of judgment He will gather His people before Him, and glorify His grace in their eternal salvation. “He will come to be glorified in His saints and admired by all them that believe.” He will be glorified by their variety; out of all nations and kindreds and tongues. He will be glorified by the circumstances attending their salvation. These are they which have come out of great tribulation—through reproaches and persecutions. He will be glorified by the infinite rewards which He will then bestow upon them. 2. “To Him be dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” Christ hath a natural dominion as God, and in this His people acquiesce and rejoice. “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.” But He hath acquired dominion as Mediator by grant from His Father. “Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance,” &c. As the reward of His obedience. “He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted Him,” &c. This is but partly established. So He hath taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” &c. (*R. Watson.*) *The measureless love of Christ*:—I. THE DURATION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. He had us in His heart ages before any sign appeared of our existence upon this earth—in spirit He was slain for us—before the foundation of the world. The most ancient of all love is that of Jesus. But turn now from the past to the future. Even as to this present life, what a distinction does it confer on any attachment

cherished towards us, the absolute certainty of its continuance, of its surviving all the trials of time, or separation, or misunderstandings, or collisions of interest, or variations of taste and of pursuit. We rejoice in the knowledge that there are earthly friendship, which are wholly delivered from all such fear; that there are those of whom we are assured that, come what will with them or us, they will love us still, will love us to the end. But then, there is that close of all things here below; and what of the existence afterwards? Who shall love us throughout that unknown, unending life which awaits us beyond the grave? Shall those who loved us so long and so tenderly here be there beside us to bless us with an everlasting affection? We hope so; in our best moments we believe that it shall be so. Still, there is a shade of dimness over the prospect. There is, however, one love upon whose continuance through time and throughout eternity we can most securely count. He whose heart it fills, is the same yesterday, to day, for ever. II. LET US CONTEMPLATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN THE WIDTH OF ITS EMBRACE, ITS AMPLITUDE, ITS INFINITY. It surrounds us with its vast, its measureless expanse. Its mighty volume is around each separate spirit, as if the enfolding of that spirit, the guiding, guarding, purifying of that spirit were its sole and separate care. Yet what untold multitudes of such spirits does it embrace. III. THE INTENSITY OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST AS SHOWN IN ACTUAL OPERATION. We measure the intensity of any affection by the difficulties it overcomes, the burdens it bears, the services it renders, the sacrifices it makes. Now, so far as we can see, there was a great initial difficulty in the love of Christ turning upon such sinners as we are. For what is it that begets love but the sight in the object of that which is lovable? Was there not much fitter rather to alienate than to attract? This very feature, however, of the love of Christ—that it was love to those not worthy of it, is one that goes far to enhance it in our esteem. He saw in us the guilty that might be pardoned, the defiled that might be purified, the lost that might be saved. Nay, the very things in us that might have turned away another benefactor, and led him to seek a more congenial field of labour, gave but the quicker wing, and the firmer footstep to that great love. The life of Christ on earth was throughout a manifestation and expression of this love. For let us remember that it is not merely a human heart that beats in Jesus Christ—a human sensibility with which that heart is gifted. The Divine capacity to love is present here, and the Divine sensibility attaching to that capacity. (*W. Hannay, D.D.*) *Christ's present love, and its great outcome:*—[Read “loveth us, and loosed us from our sins.”] I. THE EVERPRESENT, TIMELESS LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST. John is writing these words of our text nearly half a century after Jesus Christ was buried. He is speaking to Asiatic Christians, Greeks and foreigners, most of whom were not born when Jesus Christ died, none of whom probably had ever seen Him in this world. To these people he proclaims, not a past love, not a Christ that loved long ago, but a Christ that loves now when John was writing, a Christ that loves us nineteenth-century Englishmen at the moment when we read. Another thing must be remembered. He who speaks is “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Is it not beautiful that he thus takes all his brethren up to the same level as himself, and delights to sink all that was special and personal into that which was common to all. The foundation of all our hopes and all our joys, and all our strength in the work of the world should be this firm conviction, that we are wrapped about by, and evermore in, an endless ocean, so to speak, of a present Divine love, of a present loving Christ. Then, further, that love is not disturbed or absorbed by multitudes. He loveth us, says John to these Asiatic Christians; and he speaks to all ages and people. Again, it is a love unchilled by the sovereignty and glory of His exaltation. The Christ of the gospels is the Christ in His lowliness, bearing the weight of man's sins; the Christ of the Apocalypse is the Christ in His loftiness, ruling over the world and time. But it is the same Christ. From the midst of the glory and the sevenfold brilliancy of the light which is inaccessible, the same tender heart bends down over us that bent down over all the weary and the distressed when He Himself was weary; and we can lift up our eyes above stars, and systems, and material splendours, right up to the central point of the universe, where the throned Christ is, and see “Him that loveth us”—even us! II. THE GREAT ACT IN TIME WHICH IS THE OUTCOME AND THE PROOF OF THIS ENDLESS LOVE “He loosed us from our sins by His own blood.” The metaphor is that of bondage. “He that committeth sin is the slave of sin.” Every wrong thing that we do tends to become our master and our tyrant. The awful influence of habit, the dreadful effect upon a nature of a corrupted conscience, the power of regretful memories, the pollution arising from the

very knowledge of what is wrong—these are some of the strands out of which the ropes that bind us are twisted. We know how tight they grip. But the chains can be got off. Christ looses them by “His blood.” Like a drop of corrosive acid, that blood, falling upon the fetters, dissolves them, and the prisoner goes free, emancipated by the Son. His blood looses the fetters of our sins, inasmuch as His death, touching our hearts, and also bringing to us new powers through His Spirit, which is shed forth in consequence of His finished work, frees us from the power of sin, and brings into operation new powers and motives which free us from our ancient slavery. The chains which bound us shrivel and melt as the ropes that bound the Hebrew youths in the fire, before the warmth of His manifested love and the glow of His Spirit’s power. III. THE PRAISE WHICH SHOULD BE OUR ANSWER TO THIS GREAT LOVE. Our praise of Christ is but the expression of our recognition of Him for what He is, and our delight in love towards Him. Such love and praise, which is but love speaking, is all which He asks. Love can only be paid by love. Any other recompense offered to it is coinage of another currency, that is not current in its kingdom. The only recompense that satisfies love is its own image reflected in another heart. That is what Jesus Christ wants of you. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christ’s measureless love*:—I. THE LOVE IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN. It was not called forth by any sort of worthiness in the objects of it, but was entirely spontaneous, self-moved. No doubt these objects come to have most attractive features. In course of time they are washed, cleansed from the filthiness in which they lay by nature, or loosed from the degrading bondage in which they were held. They have moral and spiritual excellences of the highest order, though not unmixed with imperfections and impurities. But to whom are they indebted for all this distinction? To Christ alone. And what moved Him to beautify them with salvation, to take them, as it were, from the dunghill and set them among the princes? His love. When the love first rested on its objects, when it contemplated and planned their redemption in the counsels of eternity, it had respect to them simply as fallen, ruined creatures. It was while provoking the vengeance of high heaven that the arresting hand was laid on them. Nothing like personal doing or desert had any place whatever in effecting the blessed change. And this feature is made still more abundantly manifest by a consideration of the persons often thus raised to a participation in the high calling of the saints. They are not seldom those that would have been deemed by us the most unfit and unlikely. They are not the best, but the worst characters; not those standing out from their fellows for good, but for bad qualities. II. THE LOVE IS IMMENSURABLY GREAT. How shall we estimate its magnitude? In no better way than by considering what it freely bestows on its objects, and the sacrifices it makes for what it thus bestows. Try this love by both these measures. What, then, does it give those upon whom it rests? All the benefits of redemption. Take these benefits as summarised here, in connection with and as the ripened fruit of the love in question. The washing spoken of very specially points to forgiveness, the blotting out of sin in the blood of atonement. The graces of the Spirit spring up where before there were only the works of the flesh, and these graces both beautify the character and satisfy the soul. Thus believers are fitted for being kings and priests unto God and the Father. And has all this cost Him nothing, or cost Him but little? Has no sacrifice, or only a small one, been required? He has washed them in His own blood, and to it is to be traced not less their royal priesthood. His blood was that of sacrifice, of atonement, the price of our redemption. Here was the great ransom, and it is only in consequence of it that any sinner is washed and invested with a royal priesthood. Truly, when tried thus, the love passes knowledge. III. THE LOVE IS UNCHANGEABLY CONSTANT. He loved and He loveth us. Who can tell how much He suffers at the hands of His people? How unthankful and rebellious are they! But still He forgives, restores, and keeps them. No doubt there are sometimes appearances to the contrary. He withdraws from His people, hides His face from them, so that they walk in darkness, and feel as if they were utterly forsaken. But there is no proof here that His love is either gone or weakened. Behind the frowning Providence there is still a smiling face. The clouds temporarily obscure, but they do not extinguish, or even really diminish, the light of heaven. And so it will ever be. The love has stood true during all the past, and it will not fail in all the future. (*John Adam, D.D.*) *The love of Christ*:—I. With respect to THE MAINTENANCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST, we may remark, in general, that love was the spring of all His mediatory acts. No doubt, He chiefly sought the glory of His

Father, and testified His love to Him by fulfilling His will. But in prosecuting these objects He was gratifying His own love. 1. It was love that induced the Son of God to undertake our cause in the counsels of eternity. 2. The love of Christ appears in the delight He took in the prospect of the work, arduous and grievous as it was, which He had engaged to perform. 3. His love appears in the assumption of our nature. Oh, what a stoop was there! 4. The love of the Redeemer appears in the whole of His obedience unto death.

II. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF CHRIST'S LOVE. 1. It is the love of a Divine Person. 2. It is the love of a Divine Person in human nature. 3. The love of Christ is transcendently great. It is incredible to all but those who have been taught from above. III. Let us attend to the PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of this subject. 1. We may see one proof of the deep depravity of mankind. 2. Here is food for faith. 3. The reasonableness and the duty of love to Christ. (*T. McCrie, D.D.*) *The love of Christ in Redemption*:—I. SOME OF THE GREAT GENERAL CHARACTERS OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. 1. An everlasting love (*Jer. xxxi. 3*; *Psa. ciii. 17*; *Isa. liv. 7, 8*; *Eph. i. 4, 5, iii. 11*; *Rev. xiii. 8*). Does not this lead us to contemplate the glory of an infinite God, as it shines in this everlasting love? 2. Free and unmerited love (*Psa. viii. 4, cxliv. 3*; *Job vii. 17*). 3. Unsolicited love (*1 John iv. 10*; *Rom. v. 10*). There is something infinitely more noble and generous in extending mercy to the miserable without waiting for their request, than when it is hardly procured, or as it were extorted by importunity or solicitation. 4. A distinguishing love, which must greatly enhance the obligation of those who are the objects of it. 5. An expensive love. 6. A most generous and disinterested love. It was giving to those from whom He could receive nothing. 7. A most fruitful, active, and beneficent love. II. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT. 1. If so great are the obligations of believers to the love of Christ, how dreadful must be the condition of those who die in their sins. 2. Learn that the great and leading motive to obedience under the gospel, is a deep and grateful sense of redeeming love. 3. The necessity of a particular application of the truths of the gospel to ourselves, and the reliance of every believer upon them as the foundation of his own hope. 4. This leads me to invite every sinner to accept of Christ as his Saviour, and to rely upon Him as He is offered in the gospel. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *The work of works*:—The word translated “washed” should be “loosened.” I. This is the most important of all works. Sin is a chain that enslaves not the mere body, but all the faculties of the soul. What a chain is this! 1. It is heavy. 2. Galling. 3. Strong, and—4. Becomes stronger with the commission of every sin. II. This, the most important of all works, is effected by CHRIST and by HIM ONLY. He came into the world to set the captives free. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” III. That for this, the most important of all works, CHRIST RECEIVES THE PRAISES OF ETERNITY. True gratitude implies a belief in three things. 1. A belief in the value of the service-rendered. 2. A belief in the kindness of the motive which inspired the service. 3. A belief in the undeservedness of the service on our part. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Living love*:—It is the echo of the heavenly harping that John hears. This is what they are singing on high, and what we are training for here. I. THE SOURCE OF SALVATION IN ETERNITY. “Unto Him that loved us.” When God set out for His journey of redemption He must have looked round the shelves of glory for what to take, as some of you starting on a journey, pack your bag or portmanteau. Certain things you take with you for the journey. So with God. There are the thunders of almighty power. Is He to take these? No. He became man—poor, feeble man, and the thunders slept till He came back. Is He to take the glory above the sun’s strength? Is He to take the robe of uncreated light? No. He strips Him of the visible Godhead. He lays aside the uncreated Shekinah manifestation, but He takes something—something that heaven can give and that earth needs. He dips His almighty heart in love. He cannot do without that. He will not get love enough here, and if He is to bring love He must get it before He starts. He comes with the only qualification for His great work that He sees needful—love in His heart. And it is that love that you and I need, the love that death hath no power over, a love that is to exist and be strong when yonder sun flickers out into eternal midnight. It is that love that my longing soul craves for, and it is that love that is in Christ’s heart. Human love!—why, we dare only creep from headland to headland; we cannot launch out into the deep, for death is nigh. But in Christ’s love you can let your soul go. You can sail into the mighty ocean assured that there is no limit, that there is no further

shore to it, that there are no shoals to tear the ribs of the vessel of your heart asunder. The love of Christ will outlive the sun; the love of Christ will be strong in mighty current when the stars, the last of them, pull a veil over their faces and die. The love of Christ is the one eternal, abiding, almighty force in the universe. Can you sing it? "Unto Him that loved us" with a deathless, undying, unchanging, abiding, eternal love, to Him "be glory and dominion for ever and ever." II. THE EFFECT OF SALVATION IN TIME. The stream runs from the hillside to the valley, and it gets deep and wide and broad, and the masts of the navy of a commercial city are reflected in its fair bosom. So with the love of God. It came rushing out of the pearly gates a mighty torrent, and it came down to the valley and expanded there into a broad lake, and the love has become a fact in time. And the way it has become a fact is this: The love has washed us in the precious blood of Christ. Oh, how foul we were, how the streets of time had left their defilement on our spirit. A thousand rivers—have they water enough to cleanse a sinful heart? What did God find and feel to be necessary? What is that awful tinge that reddens the waves of the laver of regeneration? What is this mysterious chemical, Thou, God, art putting there? Why this agony of Thy beloved Son? Why the open side, why the pierced hands and feet, why the blood? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," says God. If you turn to the Revised Version you will see the word "loosed" for "washing." It is the same idea, but more vigorously expressed. Sometimes when the dirt sticks you take pumice stone, or something that will rub or scrape. And so the Greek word shows that God's washing is so effectual, the blood of Jesus is so powerful in its cleansing, that it is more like cutting off, it is more like excising and putting aside. The word is a strong word—loosing, cutting us out from our sins by His precious blood. III. THE EFFECT OF SALVATION ON MAN. "And hath made us kings." We crouch, a slave, to the Cross, but we give three leaps from it, and tread to heaven with the tramp of a king. The Cross gives dignity, the Cross gives royalty, to the saved heart. Christ crowns us when the heart accepts Him. We are kings, and we have a country. We are not like John Lackland, for a king must have a kingdom. We are kings from the Cross, and what is our kingdom? It is our heart, our own soul, that is our kingdom. Your great country of promise has to be conquered by your own little fist of fulfilling. So with your heart. It is the promised land, but you have to fight for it. You have, as a conqueror, to make the plains of your own soul reverberate with your own tread. Old habits come out! old sins, passions, lusts, come out! "Put your feet on the necks of them," says Christ, and I, by the grace of God, put my feet on old habits, old sins, old passions, and am king over my own heart. "And hath made us kings." And it is the priest's service that God accepts and needs to-day. It is the profession of adoration, it is the song of praise from my heart that He cannot get from the harps of heaven. It is this, that you and I should just tell Him more that we love Him. You know they say a Scotchman never tells his wife he loves her till he is just dying. Well, it is a great pity. In this world he would be happier and she would be happier, if he would tell his love into the ear while it can hear. So the Lord Jesus is longing for you and me, in time, while we have the opportunity, just to tell Him. Go home, then, to your own room, and kneel down and say in this holy priesthood of thine, "Lord Jesus, I adore Thee, I love Thee; to Thee be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (*John Robertson*). *The believer's acknowledgment of Christ's love*:—I. WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US. 1. Christ loved us. You all know, from the feelings of your own hearts, something of what it is to love, and likewise what it is to be the object of affection. Christ's love to His people surpasses in intensity and purity and disinterestedness anything that was ever felt by a human heart. There was no worth or excellence, no good thing about us. In His eyes we were unseemly and loathsome objects. We were altogether unable to render Him any service, or to make Him any compensation for the benefits He might bestow. His essential happiness and glory could neither be diminished by our ruin, nor increased by our salvation. And consider who it was that loved us in this manner; for we are in the habit of estimating the value of any expression of love by the character and condition of the individual from whom we receive it. Now He who thus loved us was not a mere man like ourselves, but He was the Eternal God, the Author and the Head of the whole creation; He was not an angel or an archangel, but One whom all the angels of God are commanded to worship; He was not liable to errors of judgment, or to mistakes of feeling, but He was possessed of the Divine perfections, as well as the Divine nature and prerogatives. 2. "He washed us from our sins in His own blood." This was the first great step that

was necessary in order to our deliverance and salvation, and this accordingly is mentioned as the first great manifestation of Christ's love that was poured out upon believers. 3. "He has likewise made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." Here the priestly character, as well as the "kingly" one, is but imperfectly developed, and its privileges but partially enjoyed. Here we see through a glass, darkly. But a time will come when all believers shall see face to face—when their intercourse with God shall be much more close and uninterrupted and delightful than it has ever been upon earth—when anything that can defile or annoy shall be taken away. II. THE FEELINGS AND DESIRES WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US OUGHT TO PRODUCE. (*W. Cunningham, D.D.*) *The love of Christ*:—I. IN THIS SONG THE REDEEMED MAKE GRATEFUL MENTION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST; that being the spring of all their present privileges and all their future hopes. This is well put first in order, not only because it is the source of every spiritual blessing, but also because it is in itself their chief happiness—they being the objects of his love; and every ingenuous mind will more esteem the kindly heart, than the costly gifts of a benefactor. How, in ordinary cases, do we estimate the strength of a friend's affection for us? Is it in the first instance by the ardour with which it is expressed in words? Then what are the terms in which the Redeemer speaks of His people? "I have loved them with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Does it enhance our esteem of the benignant heart of a friend, when his kindness is continued, notwithstanding we have given him cause of offence; and is that friendship sufficient to melt the hardest heart which requites every offence with forgiveness, and suffers us not to sink under an unworthy return? Then is Christ such a friend. Is the love of a friend the more valued because it comes to us in circumstances of great destitution or distress? Now, it was when we were miserable and poor that the Redeemer loved us. His office was to bind up the broken-hearted, and to make the mourner glad. Do we appreciate the friendship which we have reason to believe has no connection with selfish motives or personal ends? The friendship of the Redeemer was purely disinterested. The only reward which He sought was the salvation of His people. The only joy that was set before Him was, that He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Do we estimate the strength of a friend's affection for us by his fondness for our society, by his affording us free access at all times, and by the frequency and kindness of his invitations to meet us? Then with what condescension has the Redeemer invited, nay, urged His people to repair to Him as their friend, as "a very present help to them, in every time of need!" Do we estimate the strength of a friend's affection by the sacrifices he makes, or by the personal sufferings He endures for our sakes? Then what sacrifice is so great, what sufferings so severe as those of the Son of God? Do we estimate the kindness of an earthly friend by his long-suffering patience in bearing with our infirmities, and in dealing tenderly with us, even when we most try his patience by our provocations? And what believer can fail to acknowledge that he is a living monument of the Redeemer's mercy, an unprofitable servant whom none but Divine patience could have spared. Finally, do we rest with confidence on the friendship of one who identifies himself with us, and acts as if our interests and his own were the same? Then is Christ the friend of His people. Whoso, saith He, receiveth you receiveth Me: Whoso shall give but a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. II. BUT THAT LOVE WAS NOT WITHOUT EFFECT, and the beloved disciple adverts to SOME OF THE BENEFITS WHICH HAVE FLOWED FROM IT TO HIS PEOPLE. He has washed us from our sins in His own blood. The words imply that the Saviour's blood was shed, and shed for the remission of sins; and it was a noble proof of His love. They also intimate that, besides being shed, that blood had been savingly applied, and had sufficient efficacy to wash them from their sins. And believers will ever regard the saving application of that blood to their consciences as no less proof of the Redeemer's kindness than the fact of His having shed it. His love in leading them to that fountain is not less to be celebrated than His love in having opened it, especially when it is considered that, without such a personal application of His blood to them individually, His death would have been of no avail. By that blood they were delivered from the burden of an accusing conscience, and admitted into peace and friendship with God. By that blood they were delivered for ever from judgment to come. III. THE DESIGN OF THE SAVIOUR WAS NOT ACCOMPLISHED, NOR HIS LOVE EXHAUSTED, BY PARDONING THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE. It was His design to advance them as monuments of His grace to a state of great dignity, and to

employ them in a very exalted station. IV. IT IS THE NATURAL FRUIT, AND A STRONG EVIDENCE OF FAITH, AND AT THE SAME TIME A SOURCE OF GREAT SPIRITUAL COMFORT, TO BE MUCH ENGAGED IN REFLECTING ON THE LOVE OF THE REDEEMER, AND REGARDING WITH HOLY GRATITUDE THE BENEFITS WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED OR YET EXPECT AT HIS HANDS; for while we thus meditate on His love, and on our own honour and privileges, as His people, our hearts will burn within us, and our lips break forth in His praise. To many among us, indeed, who are downcast and sorrowful, it may seem as if this strain were more fitted for those who have already fought the good fight, and finished their course, than for us who are still in the body, burthened with the remains of a corrupt nature; weak, yet beset with strong temptation; prone to backsliding. But may not the most desponding believer take courage at least from their success? May not their triumphant song inspire us with new hopes, since it tells us that men like ourselves have obtained the victory. (*Jas. Buchanan.*) *The redeemed ascribing glory to Christ:—*I. WHAT CHRIST'S SAINTS OWE TO HIM. 1. A debt of everlasting love. "Unto Him that loved us." 2. The debt of their redemption. 3. The debt of glory. He "hath made us kings and priests unto God, even His Father." "A kingdom of priests," some will read it. Be it so. Then they are, in reality, what the Israelites were typically, "a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, a peculiar people." In the light of this interpretation we see the significance of the washing previously mentioned; for when any one of that royal and priestly nation had contracted any ceremonial uncleanness, before he was restored to his national privileges—or when any one was called to minister to God in the priestly office, before he was consecrated to the service—and every time before he went into the temple to minister—it was ordained that he should be washed. Or, let us interpret, as promising separate offices in glory, that expression "kings and priests." We have here evidently a complete reversal of their condition before regeneration. Once they were slaves, now they are not only set free, they are made kings to God. Once they were afar off, now they are not only brought nigh, they are engaged as priests in His own immediate service; kings and priests to One to whom to serve in the most menial capacity, in the outermost courts of His earthly temple, were a dignity of surpassing honour. II. We will now advert to THE ASCRIPTION BY THE SAINTS TO CHRIST, IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO HIM, OF GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER—which glory and 'dominion, you will observe, are the very things of which Christ disrobed Himself in order to accomplish their salvation; and common justice demands that they should be restored to Him when the work is done; nay, more, that they should not only be restored, but restored with increase. (*G. Campbell.*) *How wonderful that Christ should love us:—*We know how to love our children, because they are better than we; we know how to love our friends, because they are no worse than we; but how Christ can stoop from out the circle of blessed spirits to love us, who are begrimed with sin, and bestormed with temptation, and wrestling with the lowest parts of humanity—that is past our finding out. He has loved us from the foundation of the world; and because heaven was too far away for us to see, He came down to earth to do the things which He has always been doing profusely above. Christ's life on earth was not an official mission; it was a development of His everlasting state; a dip to bring within our horizon those characteristics and attributes which otherwise we could not comprehend;—God's pilgrimage on earth as a shepherd, in search of His wolf-imperilled fold. And when I look into His life, I say to myself—"As tender as this, and yet on earth! What is He now, then? If He was such when imprisoned in the flesh, what is He now in the full liberty and largeness of His heavenly state?" (*H. W. Beecher.*) *And washed us from our sins in His own blood.—Christ's eternal sacrifice:—*There is no such thing as age in His sacrifice; centuries cannot give antiquity to His atonement, time cannot wear out its virtues. His blood is as precious now as when it was first shed, and the fountain for sin and uncleanness flows with a stream as full and purifying as when first it was opened. And how? Simply because by His intercession He perpetuates His sacrifice; and His offering, though not repeated on earth, is incessantly presented in heaven. It was enough that He should once die to make atonement, seeing He ever lives to make intercession. He is now carrying on in heaven the very office and work which He commenced when upon earth; and, though there is no visible altar and no literal sacrifice, no endurance of anguish and no shedding of blood, yet still He presents vividly and energetically the works of His Passion, and the effect is the same as though He died daily, and acted over again and again the scene of His tremendous conflict with "the powers of darkness."

(*E. Mason, D.D.*) *The filthy can be made clean*:—In some of our factories the filthiest of rags are put through a purifying process and made clean. They enter the machine soiled and dirty, they come out beautifully white and clean sheets of paper. Thus will even a poor illustration show us that our righteousness is as filthy rags, but that through the blood of Christ we are washed and made white as snow. (*Silas Jones.*) **And hath made us kings and priests unto God.**—*Kings and priests*:—Now, observe that this dignity of “kings and priests” is conferred as by a definite act, contemporaneous with, or, at the most, immediately consequent on, the “loosing from our sins.” It is then a present dignity. **I. JESUS CHRIST, THE GREAT KING, WILL CROWN US KINGS, TOO, IF WE WILL.** Every man who has become the servant of Christ is the king and lord of everything else; to submit to Him is to rule all besides. Reign over what? 1. First, over the only kingdom that any man really has, and that is himself. We are meant to be monarchs of this tumultuous and rebellious kingdom within. We are like some of those little Rajahs whose states adjoin our British possessions, who have trouble and difficulty with revolted subjects, and fall back upon the great neighbouring power, saying: “Come and help me: subdue my people for me, and I will put the territory into your hands.” Go to Christ and say: “Lord! they have rebelled against me! These passions, these lusts, these follies, these weaknesses, these sinful habits of mine, they have rebelled against me! What am I to do with them? Do Thou come and bring peace into the land, and Thine shall be the authority.” And He will come and loose you from your sins, and make you kings. 2. And there is another realm over which we may rule; and that is, this bewitching and bewildering world of time and sense, with its phantasmagoria and its illusions and its lies, that draw us away from the real life and truth and blessedness. Do not let the world master you! It will, unless you have put yourself under Christ’s control. He will make you king over all outward things, by enabling you to despise them in comparison with the sweetness which you find in Him, and so to get the highest good out of them. He will make you their lord by helping you to use all the things seen and temporal as means to reach a fuller possession of the things unseen and eternal. Their noblest use is to be the ladder by which we climb to reach the treasures which are above. They are meant to be symbols of the eternal, like painted windows through which our eye may travel to the light beyond, which gives them all their brilliancy. If you want to be set free from all these things, to be lifted above them, to have a joy that they cannot touch, and an inward life which they will feed, and not thwart, such emancipation from their control, such power of using them for your highest purposes, can only be secured by taking Christ for your King and resting your souls upon Him. 3. And then, all things serve the soul that serves Christ. **II. THE KING, WHO IS THE PRIEST, MAKES US PRIESTS AS WELL AS KINGS.** In what is the force of this grand conception of the Christian man’s dignity? Four things make the priest—two of them express his standing, one of them his office, one of them his character. The priestly standing is marked by consecration and free access to God, the priestly office is sacrifice, the priestly character is purity. And these four things—consecration, direct access to God, the power of offering sacrifice which is acceptable to Him, and purity of life and heart—are the gifts of Christ’s hands to each of you, if you will have them. Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master, and even here on earth, the Christian life is the life of Christ in the soul, and consists in growing likeness to Him. Is He a King? So are we. Is He a Priest? So, therefore, are we. Is He a Son? So are we. Is He the Heir? So are we. Is He the “Anointed”? “He that in Christ hath anointed us is God.” His offices, His dignity, His character, His very life becomes ours, if we are His. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The humility and dignity of the Christian life* (with ver. 1):—**I. THE HUMILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** 1. The Christian life is a service: rendered to—(1) God. (2) Christianity. (3) The Christian himself. (4) Humanity. It is—(a) Great in requirement. (b) Solemn in obligation. (c) Eternal in reward. 2. The Christian life as a service is esteemed lowly. **II. THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** 1. It is a life of moral rulership. He is a moral king. He rules by prayer. Many conspiracies are formed against Him, but He outlives and controls them all. 2. It is a life of moral sacrifice. He is a priest, not domineering and exclusive, but loving and expansive in His sympathies. **III. THE HARMONY BETWEEN THE KINGHOOD AND THE SERVANTHOOD.** 1. The Christian is a king because he is a servant. 2. The Christian is a priest because he has a trust. Lessons: 1. As servants of God let us do His work. 2. As kings of God, let us extend His kingdom. 3. As

priests of God, let us offer His sacrifices. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christians are kings*:—I. IN RESPECT OF THEIR BIRTH AND EXTRACTION. Their lineage is direct and undisputed from Him who is the fountain-head of all honour and authority. They hold in their veins the blood royal of heaven. Though not by natural, yet by spiritual birth, which is better, they are the “sons of God”; though not by succession or inheritance, yet by adoption which is equally valid, and yet more distinguishing. II. IN RESPECT OF THEIR RELATIONS AND ALLIES. 1. They are members of a family, partly on earth and partly in heaven, which is all legitimate and royal; which is unstained by any inferior, impure admixture. 2. Their allies, too, are royal like themselves. “Ye are come to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.” “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” III. IN RESPECT OF THE DOMINION WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN CALLED TO EXERCISE. The empire of a Christian is his own heart—“the kingdom of God is within him.” And “wisdom,” says Solomon, the wisdom of self-government, “is better than weapons of war”—better, inasmuch as it supersedes the use of them; “and he that ruleth his spirit is better,” bolder, more truly courageous and noble, “than he that taketh a city.” Until ye thus become “kings,” you must needs remain, not only subjects, but slaves. You are not your own masters; your “unruly lusts and passions” have the command of you. IV. TO THE EXERCISE OF THIS KINGLY DOMINION, THERE ARE PRINCELY, KINGLY REVENUES ATTACHED. Believers are not left to their own resources in maintaining their high dignity. In themselves, and in their own right, they are as poor and dependent after their elevation as they were before it; their ability to rule is derived exclusively from Him who gave them the authority to do so, who “made them kings unto God!” They are not only the allies, but the stipendiaries, so to speak, of Christ; they have all their riches from Him, and in Him. He is not only the “Lord of their treasury,” He is their treasury—their storehouse itself. In regard to temporal provision, they may indeed be poor—they often are so. But poor though they be, they always have enough—enough for their real, as distinguished from their imaginary wants. Besides, whatever they have, they have not by permission, or toleration merely, but by inheritance and of right. Then, as to their spiritual provision, if that is not—not only ample but abundant, they have themselves alone to blame for the deficiency. And voluntary poverty of this kind is not only unnecessary, it is injurious, it is sinful; it is dishonouring to Him who has made them what they are. The whole domain of Scripture is theirs—ever fresh and verdant—in which to expatiate and delight themselves: the “wells of salvation” are theirs—“the upper springs, and the nether springs,” “from which to draw water with joy.” Theirs are the treasures of grace—theirs is the hope of glory! V. Yet, after all, it remains to be added, THE CHIEF PART OF THE DIGNITY TO WHICH BELIEVERS ARE ADMITTED IS YET TO COME; or at least yet to be known and seen. In the present state, it is the least part of it which is visible. God’s people below are kings in disguise. They are travelling, in the dress of pilgrims, to their dominions above. In conclusion, let me remark—1. If the statements now given be true, there are few Christians who know what their privileges are; and fewer still, it is to be feared, who are careful to realise and enjoy them. 2. Let me say to those of you who are, or who believe yourselves to be, “kings unto God,” “Be holy.” To “keep one’s own heart with all diligence”—to rule one’s own unruly spirit, the temper, the appetites, the passions—to have that “little member” in subjection, which “worketh mightily, and which no man can tame,” that is to be a king. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Christians a royal priesthood*:—I. THE FUNCTIONS OR OFFICES HERE ASSIGNED TO BELIEVERS. 1. They are made kings. Temporal power and dignity belong to earthly kings. To Christ, the great King, belong all Divine power and glory. And all His redeemed followers partake of His power and dignity. (1) Christians are kings in respect of their power. They have wonderful power over all their enemies, if they are but careful how to use it and to put it forth. Thus they can resist the devil, until he flees from them. They can also resist their own evil tendencies, mortify the deeds of their bodies, crucify their flesh with its affections and lusts. And they can withstand the world, despising its allurements, and patiently enduring its frowns. (2) Christians are also kings in dignity, as regards both their personal dignity and their borrowed glory. (a) They partake of the personal dignity of kings. They have in them a kingly nature. There is a moral majesty in the character of all God’s children. (b) Christians also partake of a borrowed dignity

that is Divine. They partake of the glory that belongs to the Divine Redeemer. They are arrayed in the robes of His righteousness. Go to the dying-bed of a mighty, graceless monarch, and you find him, in the midst of weakness and of misery, hastening down to the sides of the pit. Go to the dying-bed of an humble child of God, and, though you find him on his pallet of straw, yielding to the power of dissolution, his face is radiant with the light of the Divine countenance, and with the hopes of glory that fill and cheer his heart; and already you see Satan, death, and hell dragged, as powerless, prostrate foes, at the chariot-wheels of his triumphant faith, and find him raising the song of victory over all his enemies, as one who already feels that in Christ he is more than conqueror. 2. Christians are made priests. (1) The foundation of the priesthood of Christians is their oneness with Christ. As bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, their surety and representative, their sin-bearer, their righteousness, and their life, all that He did and suffered for them, and is doing for them, they are dealt with as having done and suffered themselves, as now doing in and with Him. (2) The introduction of Christians into their priesthood. (a) They are called to it by God. (b) They are Divinely qualified and prepared for their priestly work. They have been duly purified, being washed by Christ from their sins in His own blood. They are clothed in the necessary priestly vestments; for Christ has put upon them the garments of salvation; He has covered them with the robe of His righteousness (Isa. lxi.); He has arrayed them in that fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints (chap. xix.); and they have an unction from the Holy one, a Divine anointing, an anointing of the Spirit, by which they are made to know and love their priestly work (1 John ii.). They are thus prepared to yield themselves unto God, as alive from the dead, through Jesus Christ. (3) Thus called to their work, and qualified for it, they perform the duties of their priesthood, as the proper business of their life. They present their bodies a living sacrifice (Rom. xii.). They present to God the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart (Psa. li.). They offer the sacrifice of a living faith (Phil. ii.). They offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or what are termed "the calves of their lips" (Hos. xii., Heb. xiii.). They lay on Christ, as their altar, the deeds of love done by them to others; remembering that with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Heb. xiii., Phil. iv.), and that they are the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable to God (Phil. iv.).

II. THE INSEPARABLE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ROYALTY AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRISTIANS, BETWEEN THEIR WORK AS KINGS AND THEIR WORK AS PRIESTS. They have the honour, and exercise the power, of kings, because thus only can they be prepared to perform their duty as priests. For, as kings, they are laden with honours, make conquests, and in various ways put forth their power, and accumulate the fruits of its exercise, in order that, as priests, they may take their honours, resources, and conquests, and the varied fruits of their power, and consecrate them all to the service and glory of God. III. THE SUBORDINATION OF THEIR KINGLY TO THEIR PRIESTLY OFFICE AND WORK. The office of Christians, as priests, is higher than their office as kings. And the reason is found in the very nature of the offices of believers, as kings and as priests to God. For, as kings, they but rule over themselves, and over creation around, conquering and keeping under the spiritual enemies that fill and surround them, and causing the creatures around them to pay them tribute. But as priests, they turn their back upon creation, and their faces toward God, and stand in His immediate presence, and minister before His eternal throne. As kings, they but exhibit the honour with which they themselves are invested. But as priests, they are employed in giving all glory to God. They are thus not priestly kings, but kingly priests. They are a "royal priesthood." This view of the subordination of their kingly to their priestly office and work, becomes more evident and impressive when we consider how their office, as kings, shall at length be in a great measure absorbed in their office as priests. For when, as kings, they have conquered sin and Satan, and death and hell, they shall come out of all their tribulation, and wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and be before the throne of God, and, as priests, for ever serve Him day and night in His temple. And though, as kings, they shall at last appear with crowns of glory, yet, as priests, they shall take their crowns, and cast them at the feet of Him who bought them with His blood; and they shall then, and for ever, have it for their chief employment, to give, as priests, all glory to the Eternal. (W. Nixon.)

The responsibility of exaltation.—Frederick the Great, before he became "the Great," was seated with his roystering companions, and they were drinking and hallooing, and almost imbecile, when word came to him that his father was dead, and consequently the crown was to

pass to him. He rose up from among the boisterous crew, and stepped and cried, "Stop your fooling; I am Emperor!" (*T. de Witt Talmage*). To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—*A glorified Christ*:—I desire to speak of Christ glorified. But how shall we learn what He is like on His throne? These dim eyes cannot pierce the skies and the clouds to see Him. Men look through their telescopes at the stars, and mere sparkling points of light prove to be burning suns. But no telescopes can reveal to us Christ on His throne. Some day we shall see Him as He is, but now no eye can behold Him. Yet human eyes have seen Him in vision since He went back to His glory, and those who saw Him have told us what they saw. The beloved disciple had a vision of His glory. 1. He appears as a glorified Lord. Very wonderful is the contrast between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of the Revelation. Yet they both are one. In the lowly Jesus of the Incarnation all the Divine glory was enshrined. Men did not see its outflashings, but the splendour was there. But now in heaven there is no longer any concealing or hiding of His glory. In our Lord's intercessory prayer at the Last Supper He prayed, "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." This prayer was answered. He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 2. We must not fail to notice that it is as man—God-man—that Jesus Christ is glorified. John saw in vision "one like unto a Son of Man" in the midst of the golden candlesticks. That is, He bore there in the glory the form of our humanity. It was that same body on whose bosom John leaned, whose feet Mary bathed with her ointment, which had lain in the grave, and in which Thomas saw the wounds—it was that same body that was taken up into heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father. As He never for a moment ceased to be God while here on the earth in lowly flesh, so He has never for a moment ceased to be man since ascending into the heavenly places. The Godhead and the humanity are forever inseparable. How near it brings Him to us to think of Him as really human still, in His eternal glory! How it exalts our thought of the dignity of humanity to remember that one of our race is on the throne of thrones! 3. Another feature of the glorified Christ, as He appeared in vision to John, was His complete victoriousness. We must never forget that His exaltation was won. He was crowned with glory and honour for the sufferings of death. Especially does He appear in John's vision as victor over death. Those who were raised up before Him were only brought back to a few more years of the old life of struggle, pain, and sinning. They were still under death's power, and had to die again. But Christ was born from death into life—not the old life of pain, infirmity, struggle, tears, and mortality, but into life—full, rich, blessed, immortal. 4. The vision of the glorified Christ shows Him deeply interested and active in our behalf in heaven. In John's vision the risen Lord appears in the midst of the golden candlesticks. The golden candlesticks are the Churches of the Redeemer in this world. The vision then represents Christ as in the midst of His Churches, always with His people. He is still the Good Shepherd. The same truth is taught in another part of the same vision. "He had in His right hand seven stars." The stars, we are told, are the Churches of the redeemed. The symbol is very beautiful. Christ's Churches are stars in this dark world. But He held the stars in His right hand, the hand of strength and honour; so He holds His Churches in His right hand. The picture suggests guidance, security, help. Christianity cannot fail while the all-conquering Christ holds the Churches in His right hand. Let us look a little more closely into the manner of Christ's activity in heaven for us. What does He do there on our behalf? Several things. Having all power in heaven and earth, He rules so that all things work together for good, not only for His Church at large, through the ages, but for every individual believer who trusts Him and follows Him. Shall we be afraid, amid enemies and storms and convulsions and conflicting providences, while the government of all things is in the hands that were pierced with the nails for our redemption? Another form of the activity of the glorified Christ in heaven is His intercession for us. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *Thanksgiving*:—The angel of requests—so the legend runs—goes back from earth heavily laden every time he comes to gather up the prayers of men. But the angel of thanksgiving, of gratitude, has almost empty hands as he returns from his errands to this world. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. Behold, He cometh with clouds.—*Behold, He cometh*:—The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is set before us as the supreme hope of the Church, that great and glorious event towards which all is leading up, or for which all is preparing.

This being so, our feelings in regard of it will serve us as a test by which to gauge ourselves with respect to our present condition before God. If things are as they should be with us, we shall be able to say from our heart, "Even so, Amen." Have any of us failed before this simple test? Have we come to the conclusion that, though we hope we love the Lord, we do not love His appearing? What are the causes that render it possible for any true child of God to shrink from the thought of his Master's return? Conspicuous amongst these is that secret worldliness of heart, against which the Master so solemnly warned us: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with . . . the cares of this life." Have we to confess that we have been living and labouring to win wealth, or fame, or social distinction, or to better our position, and to gain the honour that cometh from man? Ah! no wonder then that we love not His appearing, for has not our worldly self become within us a little Antichrist, whom the Lord must needs destroy by the brightness of His coming? Or peradventure we are entangled by worldly associations. Instead of so loving the world as Christ loved it, and going into it to save its perishing children, we have gone there in search of social pleasure, and have found a social snare; and instead of going outside the camp bearing Christ's reproach, we have become conformed to the world's image, and accept its maxims and wear its uniform. Ah! how can we desire the Lord's appearing if we have been false to our colours? Or again, is it not only too obvious that many are prevented from uttering this prayer from the heart because they know that they have been leading an indolent and useless life? Have you an inward conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ must, as a matter of simple truth, say of your service, were He now to appear, "Thou wicked and slothful servant . . . take the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents"? Or, once again, how many a Christian is robbed of his Advent hope by some secret sin, known perhaps only to God and himself, extenuated and even defended by a perverted understanding, but already condemned by the inward witness of the Holy Ghost in his heart? It may be some crooked, or at any rate questionable, practice in business; it may be some impurity of thought, or even of action; it may be some habit of levity and frivolousness, or loose and giddy speech; or it may be a custom of exaggeration and untruthfulness which you have familiarised yourself with until you scarcely are aware of it when you fall into the fault. Or perhaps it may not be secret sin which stands between us and our hope, but rather an open and obvious inconsistency apparent to all around as well as to ourselves. Many real Christians, I am persuaded, are unable to love the Lord's appearing because they are walking rather after the flesh than after the Spirit. Now, if for any of these reasons you feel yourselves unable to love and pray for the Lord's appearing, consider, I pray you, whence you have fallen, how your highest glory is being turned into your deepest shame. Oh, cast away all that robs thee of thy Advent hope and of the joys of anticipation, and make a fresh and full surrender of thyself. But if the thought of this glorious event prove so very heart-searching to us, who have already come under the influence of God's grace, how very powerfully should it weigh with those who have not yet taken the very first step in the Christian life! It is surely high time for such to listen to the Advent cry, "Behold, He cometh with clouds." "Behold, He cometh." Oh that men would respond to that call! for here indeed is something worth looking at. Man may say "Behold!" about many things of small import, but when God says "Behold!" rest assured there is something worth looking at before us. A voice from heaven is pleading for our attention, and it seems to say, "Stop and think, the foredoomed hour draws nigh, return and come!" "And every eye shall see Him." It will not be a matter of choice or preference then, as it is now; a stern necessity will compel every human being that God has made, whether he will or no, to behold the approaching King. Drawn as by an irresistible force, all shall be brought into His presence, and find themselves arraigned before the bar of the Judge. Who are they to whom this revelation of Jesus Christ will cause such unspeakable despair? They are described here. And let us be honest with ourselves, and face the question candidly: "Do I belong to the classes that are mentioned here as being plunged into such dire distress? First we hear of those who pierced Him. Have any of us pierced Him? True, we were not present at Calvary, we had no part in driving in the iron nails into His quivering palms, or in thrusting the spear into His side. But have we never pierced Him? Yes, not once only, but over and over again, in the long, dark ages of man's history, Jesus Christ has been pierced, and He is being pierced still. How do men pierce Him? Surely by undisguised hostility and contemptuous scorn. It is wonderful to what length men will still go in their hatred of Christ. Still He has to complain,

"They hated Me without a cause." The bitter things that men of the world say about Christians, what is it but a determined attempt to wound the Master through the servants? Others, again, pierce Jesus by cold indifference and heartless ingratitude. You can be kind and tender in every other relationship of life; you are a generous husband and a considerate and sympathising father; and you are a gentle and devoted wife and a tender-hearted mother and friend; there is only one Person whom you habitually slight and treat with ingratitude and neglect, as though it were a matter of indifference to you whether you pleased or pained Him, and that Person is Divine. Him you have treated with contempt, His love you have rejected, and His mercy you have despised. Ah, how will you face Him when every eye shall see Him, and you shall know at last how your callous indifference, your black ingratitude, has pierced the sensitive heart of the Son of Man, who lived and died for you? How will you endure the wrath of the Lamb? Some of you again have pierced Jesus by deliberately choosing something which He hates in preference to Himself. Ah, how often this is done! It may be that your preference falls on some evil habit that is destroying you, body and soul; it may be some accursed sin that is poisoning your whole being, and yet you prefer it to Christ. But our text speaks of others besides these. It tells us how "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." To which of the two kindreds do you belong? Are you of the earth, earthy, or are you citizens of Mount Zion? for to one or other of these two classes we all belong. Judge yourselves, lest that day come upon you as a thief in the night, revealing to you your true character and position when the revelation comes too late. Again, we ask, Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? Those surely have nothing to fear from the Lord's appearing who can say, "Unto Him that has loved us," &c. Judgment has no terrors and eternity no alarms for those who are living in the conscious enjoyment of the benefits of redeeming love. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *The revelation of the mystery*:—St. John is speaking in the language of ancient prophecy. Christ is coming. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." This is a truth of the faith, and St. John corroborates Daniel, not because he imitates the prophetic spirit by echoing prophetic phrase, but because each prophet stands on a mountain peak of Revelation, and surveys an unalterable fact. For the mind to grow into the force of that fact is one of the most necessary methods of advance in the Spirit and will of God. I. ST. JOHN IS SPEAKING IN THE LANGUAGE OF A SEER, WHICH IS THE REAL LANGUAGE OF MAN'S IMMORTAL LIFE. His words are a cry of relieved tension of feeling, of suddenly fulfilled expectation; like the watcher from Athens catching sight of the corn-ships as they doubled Sunium; like the anxious gazer descriing in the distance the British flag which announced approaching relief to the beleaguered sufferers in Lucknow; like the dying man straining the ear through the silent night for the first footfall of one he loves, and longs to see before he dies. 1. Man expresses his sense of relation to objects and persons external to himself by two names—Time and Eternity. These names of course represent real ideas. These ideas are dim and vague enough. Surely he has to learn that Time is "a phantom of succession"; that he himself, not Time, is moving on; that now his life is partially developed; surely he has to realise that Eternity can include no sense of succession, but represents life as fully possessed. We must learn in the things of the soul to weigh and measure by the scales, by the standard of Eternity, for we are immortal. Speaking, then, as we should speak, with a sense of our full, our endless life, the close of the great conflict is not far off. 2. To each one of us there shall be a full consciousness of the coming and the presence of the Lord. "Every eye shall see Him." The eye is the watch-tower of the human spirit, whither it ascends to view God's universe. The eye is the instrument by which impressions from the objects of an outer world, impressions of colour and harmony and form, are conveyed to the lonely soul. The eye can alone convey the message, the power to use it is in the soul itself. My friends, it would seem that the human soul has a strong likeness to the poor frail human body. Living, though sick with sin, it is conscious, in a dreamlike consciousness, of the presence and claims of God; if life is failing in it, if the disease of sin is settling into spiritual death, it loses that consciousness. But one thing is certain: the hour is coming when each of us—with a consciousness of soul as clear as the sight of the eye of the body—when each of us shall see the fairest, the most awful vision, the coming Christ. Here we see but dimly; there will be the full revelation. II. WE ARE BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH HIM WHOSE APPEARING SHALL BE THE INTERPRETATION OF ALL DREAMS, THE SOLUTION OF ALL PERPLEXING PROBLEMS, "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH CLOUDS." 1. St. John's account of the pageant of Christ's appearing is an appeal to an instinct of humanity face to

face with nature. Of all natural objects that awaken the sense none can rival for power mountains, clouds, and sea. But clouds combine, in a measure, the resources of sea and mountains; smoothed out at dawn or sunset, twisted into strange contortions by the storm, they rival the solemnity of mountains in their vast proportions, and imitate in their changeful movements the beating of the waves. Everywhere they give the sense of thinly veiled depths of mystery yet to be revealed, and of the wrath and power of God against human sin. When Christ comes, then, this is certain, He will come revealing "hidden things of darkness," ay! and hidden things of light. It will be a time of unveiling. But more: He will come in the fully manifested display of God's irreconcilable antagonism to human sin. It will be a moment of startling and complete revelation. 2. But there is a further feature, the most striking of all. It is an unexpected touch in the picture which follows—"they also that pierced Him"—a sudden allusion to the Passion. Doubtless there is a warning in such words, that those who deride, reject, or seek to destroy the highest goodness now shall one day see the magnitude of their madness. But this is not all. Face to face with human sin in its closing crisis, the great Representative of the race displays before assembled worlds the extent of its malignity in wounding God. Even those who have hated it most shall then for the first time vividly realise its actual dreadfulness. And in these wounds of the Passion are exhibited the stores of the experience of human life. He is in direct relation to all, for all have pierced Him, and He has learned by experience the sorrow and sin of that humanity which is common to all. And then we are reminded that the judgment to follow takes its force and derives its necessity from the necessities of His nature. With the knowledge of God He comes, and with the feelings and experiences of man. 3. The great wall of the human family recorded in the close of the verse is its outspoken sign of recognition of the truth. In some—His persecuting enemies—the cry of fear and fury at the certainty of the triumph of goodness; to some undeveloped soul the anguish of a fuller recognition of that marvellous majesty, which on earth it only recognised by a stray sigh of penitence or a passing thought of desire: to some who through no fault of their own, by a *spécialité* of circumstances, or mystery of mental build, or owing to a fog of prejudice, or an involuntarily blinded mind, have never known Him—the purifying sorrow of awakening at last to the unveiled beauty; to some who have known and loved Him, the fuller sense—for love is the real illumination—of how unworthy they have been, how their best has been bad, their self-sacrifices pitiful, face to face with the unshrouded loveliness of that supernatural sorrow. III. WHAT, THEN, IS THE RELATION OF THAT FINAL VISION WITH THE MYSTERY OF THE PASSION? This: in that supreme crisis of humanity it is a mystery no more; or rather the souls of those who are passing from the limitations of time are themselves in a sphere of mystery; they see, they understand such visions with the quickened senses of eternity. Life here is in deepest shadow, but nothing since the beginning of creation has been so wrapped in shadow as the fact and the consequences of Calvary; if that be clear, all must be plain. And clear it will be. Christ is the Great Revealer, in Him we shall see all. What shall we see? This. The real meaning of humility. The strange and now interpreted story of the humiliation of the Cross. What shall we see? The perfected sympathy of God in Christ with all that is truly human, all that would permit that sympathy by a surrendered will. What shall we see? The evident and now intelligible splendour of the ideal of humanity. But, oh! the surprise of the souls of the blessed when first they see unveiled in awe and majesty the ideal of Divine, of human beauty—the Fairest of the fair! What shall we see? The meaning of suffering. It seemed awful, almost cruel, when borne in the darkness of probation, but here is the end. In the light of the Crucified now in unshrouded beauty, the full splendour of that suffering once borne with difficulty, but borne in patience, will reveal what, in the "valley of the shadow," lay concealed within it—some inconceivable secret of the love and the loveliness of God. What shall we see? We shall see in its overwhelming glory the mystery of power. It could only speak on earth in the mystic but eloquent symbol of the Cross. Here it is plain in the clear Revelation. Power elevating, perfecting the uncreated beauty. The power that could deal with the ruin of the creature, the redeemed the work of the Redeemer, the forces of redemption—God in Christ. (*Canon Knox Little.*) *The Second Advent of Christ*:—I. THE JUDGE. "Behold, He cometh." Who? Christ Jesus. Were He only a man, He could not be qualified for this high office, for no man, however acute his discernment, can know "the thoughts and intents of the heart"; but, being God as well as man, He is omniscient. His justice is equal to His knowledge, for "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, while

a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of His kingdom." There is no quality more important in a judge than this. II. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS APPROACH. "Behold, He cometh," exclaims the apostle, as if he had actually seen Him on His way. III. THE MANNER OF HIS COMING. "Behold, He cometh with clouds." This agrees with the exhibition that was given at the promulgation of the law from Sinai, when clouds and thick darkness, from which there proceeded flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, enveloped the mountain. And further, since clouds are always spoken of as the symbols of Divinity, and since few things are more sublime in their appearance and motion, could any representation be more descriptive of the God-like manner of His operations, or better calculated to convince us that the mighty agent in this grand movement is God? IV. THE UNIVERSAL PUBLICITY OF HIS APPEARANCE.

"Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Men of all creeds, in short, of all colours, of all grades of talent, and of all conditions of society, will be there. V. THE WAY IN WHICH THESE TWO DIFFERENT CLASSES WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE SIGHT OF THEIR JUDGE. Not one of them, we may well conceive, will behold Him with indifference. Still, however, there will be a vast difference between the feelings of the wicked and the feelings of the righteous. (*W. Nisbet.*)

*The final coming of Christ to judgment:—*I. CHRIST WILL COME TO JUDGMENT. 1. The announcement of prophecy: Enoch, Job. Christ and His disciples were frequent in their reference to His final advent. They made it a motive for diligence, an incentive to watchfulness, and the occasion of other solemn instruction. 2. The statement of Scripture. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." "He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." 3. The conviction of reason. 4. The dread expectation of conscience. II. THE COMING OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT WILL BE ASSOCIATED WITH MAJESTY AND GLORY. "He cometh with clouds."

1. The clouds are indicative of mystery. Clouds hide many things from mortal vision. So the coming of Christ will be associated with great mystery. There will be the mystery connected with a judge possessed of a nature at once human and Divine. There will be the mystery associated with the life and attendance of angelic spirits. There will be the mystery consequent upon the resurrection and trial of humanity. 2. The clouds are indicative of beauty. We have all seen and admired them. So the great coming of Christ will be associated with everything that constitutes moral grandeur. The scene will be one of supreme rectitude, of infinite purity, and, therefore, unrivalled glory. 3. The clouds are indicative of power. With what force do the clouds rush along the heavens; who, or what could resist them in their rapid march? So the final coming of Christ to judgment will be irresistible. III. THE COMING OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT WILL BE WITNESSED BY AN ASSEMBLED UNIVERSE. "And every eye shall see Him."

1. He will be seen by the devout Christian. By men who have consecrated their lives to His service. These will be in sympathy with His coming. 2. He will be seen by the impious sceptic. Hobbs and Hume will see Him. These will behold His coming with surprise. 3. He will be seen by the morally impenitent. Herod, Judas, Pilate; sinner, you will see Him. These will see Him with dismay. Hypocrite and backslider, you will see Him. You will see Him with despair. IV. THE COMING OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT MEETS WITH THE SOLEMN APPROBATION OF THE GOOD. "Even so, Amen." 1. They approve, not because they desire the final overthrow of the wicked. The good man's desire is, that the whole world should be saved. 2. They approve, because it is the legitimate termination of mortal affairs. 3. They approve, because it will lead them into a bright and more durable vision of the eternal. Lessons:—1. The world will one day see Christ. 2. Will you "wail because of Him," or say, "Even so, Amen"? (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

*The second advent:—*Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great ordinance of Jehovah for bringing all things to that state and bearing which He has assigned them in His eternal mind. The whole of this dispensation of God to man is called the mystery of God, and the whole of this mystery has its accomplishment in three comings of Christ; His coming in the flesh, His coming in the Spirit, and His coming in the clouds. It is to the last of these comings that John refers our attention in the text. "Behold He cometh." The coming of Christ in the clouds is yet, perhaps, at some distance, but faith anticipates it, realises it. 1. Now, that the coming of our Lord in the clouds is an event worthy of all your attention and wonder, I think will appear, if we consider—(1) The place from which He comes—from heaven. Angelic voices sound from that far country whither He has gone to

receive a kingdom, into the royalties and glories of which He has entered as the reward of His suffering. From that country He shall come back. 2. The coming of Christ with clouds is worthy of all our attention and wonder because of the place to which He comes. To this earth once more—to this earth where His delights were with the sons of men—to this earth in which He was born—to this earth, again, where He lived, like a common Jewish peasant, three and thirty years—to this earth again, from which He was hissed away by a scandalised death. 3. The coming of Christ in the clouds is worthy of your attention and regard, because of the circumstances of glory in which it will take place. "Behold, He cometh with clouds." Why, He came with clouds before, but they were clouds of poverty, clouds of obscurity, clouds of shame; but now He comes in clouds of glory, of brightness. 4. This coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds is an event worthy of your attention and wonder also, because of the time of it. He says, "Behold, I come quickly." He will not delay His coming beyond the time assigned for it. 5. The coming of our Lord in the clouds, is further worthy of all your attention and wonder, because of the solemn preparations which shall usher it in. There will be signs in the air, signs in the sea, signs in the sun, signs in the stars, "men's hearts failing them for fear, the sea and the waves roaring," mighty events treading on the heels of one another. 6. The coming of Christ in the clouds is an event worthy of your attention and wonder, because of the solemn work He then comes to perform. He says, "Behold I come; My reward is with Me." (*J. E. Beaumont, M.D.*) *Christ coming with clouds*:—John, who once heard the voice, "Behold the Lamb of God!" now utters the voice, "Behold, He cometh!" I. OUR LORD JESUS COMES. 1. This fact is worthy of a note of admiration—"Behold!" 2. It should be vividly realised till we cry, "Behold, He cometh!" 3. It should be zealously proclaimed. We should use the herald's cry, "Behold!" 4. It is to be unquestioningly asserted as true. Assuredly He cometh. (1) It has been long foretold. Enoch (Jude 14). (2) He has Himself warned us of it. "Behold, I come quickly!" 5. It is to be viewed with immediate interest. (1) "Behold!" for this is the grandest of all events. (2) "He cometh," the event is at the door. (3) "He," who is your Lord and Bridegroom, comes. (4) He is coming even now, for He is preparing all things for His advent, and thus may be said to be on the road. 6. It is to be attended with a peculiar sign—"with clouds." (1) The emblems of His majesty. (2) The ensigns of His power. (3) The warnings of His judgment. Charged with darkness and tempest are these gathered clouds. II. OUR LORD'S COMING WILL BE SEEN OF ALL. 1. It will be a literal appearance. Not merely every mind shall think of Him, but "every eye shall see Him." 2. It will be beheld by all sorts and kinds of living men. 3. It will be seen by those long dead. 4. It will be seen by His actual murderers, and others like them. 5. It will be manifest to those who desire not to see the Lord. 6. It will be a sight in which you will have a share. Since you must see Him, why not at once look to Him and live? III. HIS COMING WILL CAUSE SORROW. "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." 1. The sorrow will be very general. "All kindreds of the earth." 2. The sorrow will be very bitter. "Wail." 3. The sorrow proves that men will not be universally converted. 4. The sorrow also shows that men will not expect from Christ's coming a great deliverance. 5. The sorrow will in a measure arise out of His glory, seeing they rejected and resisted Him. That glory will be against them. 6. The sorrow will be justified by the dread result. Their fears of punishment will be well grounded. Their horror at the sight of the great Judge will be no idle fright. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The coming of Christ*:—I. THE COMING OF CHRIST. II. THE EVIDENCE OF HIS COMING. This appears from the character of God, from His holiness and righteousness, His faithfulness and truth, from His holy covenant, counsels and promises, His infinite glory, and Divine government. The truth of this appears from the character of Christ—from His human nature, His atoning death, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension to heaven, and Divine administration. The evidence further appears from the work of the Spirit, who convinces the world of judgment to come—from the law of God, which is perfect, pure, and spiritual, holy, just, and good. The truth of this appears from the types of Holy Writ (Numb. vi. 24-26; Matt. xxv. 34). Again, the evidence appears from the prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14, 15); from the character of God as the Judge of all the earth; from the faith of Job in the living Redeemer (Job xix. 25, 27); from many of the Psalms; from the vision of Daniel (vii. 10-14); from Christ's parables, the testimony of the angels when Jesus ascended, and from the doctrines and

promises of the prophets and apostles. The truth of this will be rendered obvious from the works of Providence, and the unequal distribution of Divine dispensations. Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth. The evidence of this appears from reason, the light of nature, the power of conscience, and the inseparable connection between the Creator and the creature.

III. THE MANNER OF HIS COMING. 1. We have in these words the solemnity of His coming. This great event is ushered in with a "Behold!" 2. We have in these words the reality of His coming. He will come personally: "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven." 3. The certainty of His coming. 4. The nearness of His coming. 5. The suddenness of His coming. His first coming was slow and progressive. IV. THE MAJESTY OF HIS COMING. "Behold He cometh with clouds." Clouds are the symbols of Divine majesty. He shall come in the Father's glory, invested with all His essential perfections, with all His authority, excellence, and majesty. He shall come in His own glory, the glory of His Deity, His person, and His offices as mediator. He shall come in the glory of the Holy Spirit, resting upon Him as the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel, and of might, of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. He shall be glorious in His throne—the great white throne. He shall be glorious in His apparel—robes of light; and also in His power—travelling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save. He shall be glorious in His chariot—the clouds of heaven, the wings of the wind. He shall be glorious in His attendants—the holy angels, the beings of light. He shall be glorious in His Church, who shall bear His blessed image, reflect His moral glory, and exhibit the transcendent excellence of the last, the finishing touch, of His glorious, skilful, wonder-working hand. He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. He shall be glorious in His last great work of judgment and mercy, now finished for ever, and He shall contemplate the whole scene with Divine delight, and pronounce it to be good. V. THE EFFECTS OF HIS COMING. The first effect is the misery of the wicked: "All the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." There is here an allusion to the book of Zechariah (chap. x. 12). The second effect is the triumph of the righteous: "Even so, Amen." The first word is Greek, the last word is Hebrew. The expression is doubled, to strengthen the assertion. It expresses the apostle's acquiescence in the promise: even so, thus let it be; it is just and right that it should be so. It expresses the soul's approbation of the promise; of all the counsels and arrangements of heaven. It expresses faith in the promise: "Lord, I believe that Thou wilt come." It implies hope in the promise: "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour." VI. THE USES OF HIS COMING. Hence see the glorious consummation of the whole plan of mercy. All the perfections of God shall be displayed, His character shall be glorified, His law shall be honoured, and His government vindicated; all His counsels shall be fully unfolded, and all the predictions of His Word shall be verified; and God shall then be all in all, in His ineffable resplendent glory. Hence see the necessity of constant preparation for the coming of Christ. We cannot die in safety unless we enjoy peace with God. (*James Young.*) **Wail.**—*Despair of sinners in judgment*:—I cannot put into English the full meaning of that most expressive word. Sound it at length, and it conveys its own meaning. It is as when men wring their hands and burst out into a loud cry; or as when eastern women, in their anguish, rend their garments, and lift up their voices with the most mournful notes. All the kindreds of the earth shall wail: wail as a mother laments over her dead child; wail as a man might wail who found himself hopelessly imprisoned and doomed to die. Such will be the hopeless grief of all the kindreds of the earth at the sight of Christ in the clouds: if they remain impenitent, they shall not be able to be silent; they shall not be able to repress or conceal their anguish, but they shall wail, or openly give vent to their horror. What a sound that will be which will go up before high heaven when Jesus sits upon the cloud, and in the fulness of His power summons them to judgment! Then "they shall wail because of Him." Will your voice be heard in that wailing? Will your heart be breaking in that general dismay? How will you escape? If you are one of the kindreds of the earth, and remain impenitent, you will wail with the rest of them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.—*Christ all in all*.—I. OF CREATION. II. OF HISTORY. III. OF SCRIPTURE. IV. OF SALVATION. V. IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER. VI. IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. (*D. R. Key, M.A.*)

Alpha and Omega:—I. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of HUMAN ASPIRATIONS. He meets men's strongest yearnings. 1. It is so in reference to theological aspirations. 2. Immortal aspirations are likewise met in Jesus. Men believe in a hereafter. On the last page of life's book we do not write *Finis*, but "To be continued in our next." Christ ministers to this yearning for immortality. "I go to prepare a place for you"; "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise"; "Where I am there also shall My servant be." II. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of HUMAN CHARACTER. Christ comprehended in Himself every form of excellence. No virtue was lacking; each grace was present. A visitor in Spain, delighted with the paintings of Rubens, asked where his bad pictures were? He failed to discover them. Inquire for the defects of Christ, and you cannot get an answer. III. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of HUMAN PRIVILEGE. What is true of the Bible is true also of Christ. It meets all moral needs. There is a bridge in a certain Austrian city on whose parapets stand twelve statues of the Saviour. He is represented in various relationships, as, for instance, prophet, priest, king, physician, pilot, shepherd, sower, carpenter. The country people, coming into town soon after dawn with produce for the market, pause before the sower or the shepherd Christ, and offer their prayers through Him. The artisans, two hours later, repairing to the workshop, bend before the carpenter Christ. Later on the sailor kneels at the feet of the pilot Christ. And in the warm sunlight of the forenoon invalids, creeping out to enjoy the fresh air, rest under the shadow of the Great Physician. Apt symbol of our Lord's adaptation to universal necessities! He is all and in all. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *Christ the Alpha and Omega*:—I. AS IT RESPECTS THE RELATION IN WHICH HE STANDS TO THE COVENANT OF GRACE. II. AS IT RELATES TO THE PERSONAL ENJOYMENTS AND SALVATION OF THE TRUE BELIEVER. III. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE GREAT WORKS OF NATURE AND PROVIDENCE. (*T. Hutchings.*) *The first and the last*:—I. First, consider the title as expressive of THE ETERNAL DURATION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S EXISTENCE. "I am the first," He says, and thereby claims precedence of all created beings and things. He is before all things, and by Him are all things. "I am the first," He says, and thereby claims to be coeval with the Father; for if the Father existed prior to Himself He could not be said to be the first. It is a most direct and unequivocal assertion of His divinity. He, as the God-man, the Divine taking upon Him the human, is the Centre and the Sun, the Alpha and Omega, of His own world. This statement is supported by the second part of His title. It points us to an impenetrable future, as the first does to an illimitable past. He is the Omega no less than the Alpha; the end even as He is the beginning. His existence bounds all being. As no one preceded Him, so no one can outlive Him. The Father does not live longer than the Son. What could show more clearly that He is dependent on none; that all are dependent on Him. It is of no small importance that you should practically realise this truth. It bears on our conduct, for if the Saviour be what this title claims, He is not to be regarded as a mere man, however holy and divinely endowed, but to be worshipped even as the Father is worshipped. It is conducive to our comfort, for, to say nothing of the efficacy which His dignity imparts to His atoning work, it is a blessed thing to know, amid the trials and the vicissitudes of this changing scene, that there is a Friend who ever lives and who is ever the same. II. Then we consider the title as EXPRESSIVE OF OUR SAVIOUR'S ACTION IN ALL THE MOVEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSE. The self-existent and independent one must necessarily be the author and upholder of all created existence. Observe 1. How unlimited is the power which is thus attributed to our Lord. The fact of creation is in one point of view the most stupendous of which we have any knowledge. While all this is awful, is it not delightful to reflect how that power is wielded by our best Friend, by One whose heart is as tender as His arm is strong, and wielded for the welfare of those who put their trust in Him? 2. He carries all things forward to their consummation. He terminates as well as originates all the processes of the universe—all beings, all things, all existence. We are not to think of Him as severed from His works, but as pervading and upholding them, and still conducting them all. He is the centre of all forces, the fountain of all law, the sustainer of all existence. Look around you in your own world; in the multitude of the activities that you witness you behold the exercise of His power. It is seen in the flowing river, in the restless ocean, in the rising and setting sun, in the still or stormy atmosphere, in all activities of organic substance, in animal and vegetable life. It is His power that bursts in the budding of the plant; His beauty which is unfolded in the opening flower; it is His

providence which shapes the life of the buzzing insect, His will that determines the mode and manner of its death. Even the smallest grain of dust takes its shape from His hands; He directs the course of every particle of spray, every feather and every snowflake in the breeze. There is nothing too minute for His care, as there is nothing too great for His might. Look into the inner world of the soul, and with equal certainty you can discern His movements there. Not only did He lay down His life to provide redemption for us, but by His Spirit He applies that redemption to the individual soul. The work of grace in its beginning, its continuance, its consummation, is all of Him. There is human instrumentality, but the efficiency is all Divine. III. Again, consider the title as intimating that ALL THINGS EXIST ON OUR SAVIOUR'S ACCOUNT, AND ACTUALLY AND ULTIMATELY TEND TO THE PROMOTION OF HIS GLORY. It is not a subject for dogmatism, scarcely for speculation, when we say that the purpose of creation was the manifestation of the Divine attributes, to give expression and embodiment to the truth, the purity, the beauty, the wisdom, the goodness, and the perfection of the attributes which exist in the Divine mind, that God might complacently behold and rest in His works, and that His intelligent creatures, beholding these perfections in the visible universe, might respond to those expressions of the Divine with devout and joyful adoration. Christ came to restore the Divine order which sin had interrupted, and all creation, true to the purpose of its existence, co-operates with Him for this end. His Incarnation is not an isolated fact; it is the centre of the universe, pointing to the past order which has been broken and is yet to be restored. (IV. Landels.) *The A and the Z:*—Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last; so that Christ in this text represents Himself as the A and the Z. That is one reason why I like the Bible; its illustrations are so easy to understand. When it represents the gospel as a hammer, everybody knows it is to knock something to pieces; or as salt, everybody who has put down meat in barrels knows it is to keep things from spoiling; or as a salve, that is to cure the old sores of the heart. Anybody who knows the *a b c* understands that the text means that Christ is the Beginning and the End in everything good. I. He is the A and the Z of THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE. By Him were all things made that are made. It is exciting to see a ship launched. The people gather in a temporary gallery erected for their accommodation. The spectators are breathless, waiting for the impediments to be removed, when down the ship rushes with terrific velocity, the planks smoking, the water tossing, the flags flying, the people huzzaing, bands of music playing. But my Lord Jesus saw this ship of a world launched with its furnaces of volcano, and flags of cloud, and masts of mountain, and beams of thunderbolt, while the morning stars shouted, and the orchestras of heaven played, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty!" The same hand that put up this universe will pull it down. II. Christ is the A and the Z of THE BIBLE. Here is a long lane, overshadowed by fine trees, leading up to a mansion. What is the use of the lane if there were no mansion at the end? There is no use in the Old Testament, except as a grand avenue to lead us up to the Gospel Dispensation. You may go early to a concert. Before the curtain is hoisted, you hear the musicians tuning up the violins, and getting ready all the instruments. After a while the curtain is hoisted, and the concert begins. All the statements, parables, orations, and miracles of the Old Testament were merely preparatory, and when all was ready, in the time of Christ, the curtain hoists, and there pours forth the Oratorio of the Messiah—all nations joining in the Hallelujah Chorus. III. Christ is the A and the Z of THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. A sermon that has no Christ in it is a dead failure. The minister who devotes his pulpit to anything but Christ is an impostor. What the world wants now is to be told in the most direct way of Jesus Christ, who comes to save men from eternal damnation. Christ the Light, Christ the Sacrifice, Christ the Rock, Christ the Star, Christ the Balm, Christ the Guide. IV. Christ is the A and the Z in THE WORLD'S RESCUE. When the world broke loose, the only hand swung out to catch it was that of Jesus. V. Christ is the A and the Z IN HEAVEN. He is the most honoured personage in all the land. He is known as a World-Liberator. The first one that a soul entering heaven looks for is Jesus. At His feet break the doxologies. Around His throne circle the chief glories. At heaven's beginning—Christ, the Alpha. Then travel far on down the years of eternity, and stop at the end of the remotest age, and see if the song has not taken up some other burthen, and some other throne has not become the centre of heaven's chief attractions. But no; you hear it thrummed on the harps and poured from the trumpets and shouted in universal acclaim, "Christ, the Omega!" (T. De Witt Talmage.)

The Alpha and Omega. :—I. The Lord Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, because HE IS THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD. The use of the various letters is just to articulate your truest self—to render intelligible to others your thoughts and wishes, your feelings and your purposes. And in this sense Immanuel is the Alpha and Omega of the ever-blessed Godhead. He is the articulation of Jehovah's mind. He is the Word of God. He is the visible embodiment of all that is in the invisible Three-One. Whatever the mind of the Lord Jesus is, the same is the mind of God; whatever the dispositions of the Lord Jesus are known to be, the same are the dispositions of Him whom no man can see; and whatever perfections were seen in the person of Christ, the same perfections reside in the great I AM. II. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, because of HIS ALL-SUFFICIENCY. Like the literal Alpha and Omega, He includes everything within Himself. He is the beginning and the ending, which is, and was, and is to come—the Almighty—the All-sufficient. There is nothing which a believer needs but he will find it in the Lord Jesus. 1. A sufficient Saviour. His name was called "Jesus," because He saves His people from their sins. You can do nothing which more truly honours Him, than to trust your salvation entirely to Him. 2. A most attractive and assimilating pattern of all moral excellence. In His direct operations on the mind, the Holy Spirit is the immediate sanctifier of God's people; but it is by revealing the great model of all excellence in the person of the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit changes them into the same likeness. 3. A wise Counsellor and unerring Guide. He knows the end from the beginning; He sees the issue of every undertaking, not only in time, but in eternity. His counsel is wonderful, for it meets the very case; and—what cannot be said of much good advice—He can not only give the best counsel, but He can make you willing to take it. In His ever-living Word, He has left principles available in all the casuistry which ever can occur in your experience—formulae which only need to be filled up with your particular case, and the doubt is at once dispelled—the path is at once made plain. III. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, because ALL THINGS THAT CONCERN THE CHURCH ARE IN HIM SUMMED UP OR "RECAPITULATED." In His person the Church on earth finds its access to God, and the earnest of its everlasting life; and in that same person the Church of the glorified finds the guarantee of permanent joy—the stability of its bliss secured. All that belong to Him are safe within the circle of the changeless love and all-embracing might of Him who filleth all in all. IV. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, because HE IS THE FIRST AND THE LAST, the beginning and the ending—He that liveth and is alive for evermore. There is a power which bade Lebanon rise, and a power which can bid Lebanon and his continental roots subside in flat chaos again. The day will come when that hoary deep must die—when old Ocean will lift up his waves and clap his cymbal hands no more. Yes, old apparatus of the universe, obsolete version of a system fast verging to decay, ye soon must vanish, and make room for a world where there is no more sea, and for cities which don't need the sun. But when ye are gone the Fountain of Life will still include in His all-encircling fulness everything that lives. (*Jas. Hamilton.*) *The security of the Church amid the vicissitudes of time*. :—I. THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION THE SAVIOUR IS PLEASED TO COMMUNICATE IN THIS PASSAGE. 1. The figurative mode of expression He employs. 2. The evident sense of His communication. Christ precedes all things by the eternity of His nature; He pervades all things by the omnipresence of His Spirit; He survives all things by the immortality of His nature. II. THE SOLEMN CONFIRMATION CHRIST DEIGNS TO AFFORD. He announces—1. The eternity of His duration. 2. The omnipotency in His possession. Christ says that He is the Almighty. III. THE BLESSED CONSOLATION THE SAVIOUR DESIGNS TO BESTOW. 1. The security it affords to the believer amid the calamitous changes of life. 2. The stability of the Church amid the overthrow of empires. 3. The immortality of the Christian amid the ravages of death. (*J. Blackburn.*) *Christ—the Alpha*. :—Take Christ first, before you think of doing anything else. Did He not say, "Without Me you can do nothing"? So, then, all you do without Him is sheer nothing, however pious and noble it may appear in the eyes of men. Is He not the Alpha, and is not the Alpha the first letter? Then do not try to put a letter before it; do not say to yourself, "I will try to obtain a true recognition of my sins, and then I will go to Jesus and obtain salvation." This is beginning with the Z instead of with the Alpha. By doing so you make yourself like that fool who said, "I will learn to swim first, and then I will go into the water." Do you want to know your sins truly? Who is to give you that knowledge but Christ? Do you want to become better and more heavenly minded? Who can give you that godly disposition of heart but Christ? (*T. Guthrie.*) The Lord, which is, and which

was, and which is to come, the Almighty.—*The eternity of God* :—I. THE DIFFERENT SENSES IN WHICH THE WORDS ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, AND EVERLASTING, ARE USED BY THE SACRED WRITERS. 1. Sometimes they signify nothing more but only a long duration (Gen. xvii. 8; Numb. x. 8; Gen. xlix. 26; Hab. iii. 6; 1 Sam. iii. 13; Exod. xxi. 6). 2. The next sense they are used in is to denote a duration continuing as long as the subject exists, and then putting it in a state out of which it shall never be restored (Numb. xxiv. 20; Deut. xiii. 16; Jude 7). 3. In other places of Scripture the words “eternal” and “for ever” signify in a higher sense a duration, not figuratively, but properly and literally everlasting, without end, though not without beginning. Thus angels and the souls of men are eternal, or immortal. 4. The last and highest and most absolutely perfect sense of the words “eternal” and “everlasting,” is when they signify a duration of inexhaustible and never-failing permanency, both without beginning and without end. And not only so, but including also necessary and independent existence, so as in no manner whatsoever to derive from any other.

II. SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THIS DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNITY OF GOD IN PARTICULAR. 1. This eternity is a perfection, an attribute, by which God is very frequently described in Scripture, in order to raise in our minds a just veneration of His Divine majesty (Deut. xxxiii. 27; Rom. xvi. 26; Isa. lvii. 15; 1 Sam. xv. 29; 1 Tim. i. 17, vi. 16; Psal. cii. 24).

2. Not only in Scripture is God frequently described by this attribute of eternity, but even under the light of nature also is He represented to us after the same manner. For since it is in some degree a perfection to be, and a greater degree of that perfection, to continue in being, it is evident, when we conceive of God the most perfect being, we must conceive Him to be infinite in this perfection also, as well as in others. Again, it is evident even to the meanest capacity which considers things at all, that He who first gave being to all other things could not possibly have any beginning Himself, and that He who hath already existed from all eternity, independently and of Himself, cannot possibly be liable to be deprived of His being, and must therefore necessarily exist for an eternity to come.

3. The true notion of the Divine eternity does not consist in making past things to be still present, and things future to be already come, which is an express contradiction. The eternal, supreme cause has such a perfect, independent, and unchangeable comprehension of all things, that in every point or instance of His eternal duration, all things past, present, and to come, must be, not indeed themselves present at once, but they must be as entirely known and represented to Him in one single thought or view, and all things present and future be as absolutely under His power and direction (Psal. xc. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 8).

III. WHAT USE THIS MEDITATION MAY BE TO US IN PRACTICE. 1. This attribute of eternity, absolute, necessary, and independent, is one of the principal characters by which the true God of the universe is distinguished from false Gods.

2. The consideration of the eternity of God is an argument why His providence ought not to be cavilled at, nor His promises doubted of, even though there be no present appearance of the performances of His promises, and no present way of explaining the methods of His providence.

3. The consideration of God's eternity is a sure ground of trust and confidence, of hope and cheerfulness, to good men at all times, seeing His protection may be relied on and depended upon for ever.

4. The consideration of this Divine perfection, the eternity of God, is a ground for frail and mortal man to hope for pity and compassion from Him.

5. The consideration of God's being eternal leads us to a right knowledge and just sense of the excellency of that reward, where-with He will finally crown those who obey His commandments.

6. If God is eternal this consideration ought to be matter of infinite terror to all impenitent sinners; that He who liveth for ever, as He will reward His servants eternally, so He can punish His enemies as long as He pleases, for there is no end of His power. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

The eternity of God the Son :—Contemplate God our Saviour—I. As HE WAS. 1. He was—in the bosom of the Father from all eternity.

2. He was—a little helpless babe, born in a stable, cradled in a manger.

3. He was—“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

4. He was—a sacrifice for sin.

5. He was—again on earth forty days (Acts i. 3).

II. HE IS—HIS PRESENT STATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. He is—glorified.

2. He is—the head of His Church.

3. He is—preparing a place for us.

4. He is—in a state of expectation.

III. HE IS TO COME. 1. His second advent is as certain as His first, and depends upon it.

2. He is to come—suddenly and unexpectedly.

3. He is to come—with power and great glory.

4. He is to come—for the final consummation of all things. (*Dean Close.*)

Vers. 9–11. I John, who also am your brother.—*St. John—a sublime character* :—

I. A character of distinguished excellence DESCRIBED. 1. As a "brother"; his heart glows with a Christly fraternity for the good of all the Churches throughout all the world. 2. As a sufferer; he is in "tribulation." The best men on earth are subject to suffering. II. A character of distinguished excellence banished by BLOODY PERSECUTORS. "In the isle called Patmos." On this desolate island, amidst the greatest villains of the age, this great character was banished. Strange that the Providence of heaven should have allowed one of the most Christly men on the earth at that time to live for an hour in such a scene. But Patmos to John, and Patmos to the other residents, was a different place. To John it was a theatre of sublimest revelations—the very gate of heaven. III. A character of distinguished excellence banished by bloody persecutors for the CAUSE OF CHRIST. He bore "testimony of Jesus," and preached the "Word of God." (*Homilist.*) *Companions in the Divine kingdom* :—1. Holy men of God, who committed to writing the oracles of heaven, frequently mention their name, their office, and the high authority with which they were invested, as an evidence of the truth of their sacred message, and as a ground of confidence in it. 2. The blessings, the promises, the hopes, the privileges of the kingdom, and the glorious prospects of life and immortality belonged in common to all the holy brethren. They were brethren in affection; they loved one another with a pure love fervently; they were brethren in profession, a holy band of brothers, united together in the faith, hope, and profession of the gospel; they were brethren in action, holy obedience, devoted effort, in deed and in truth, in work and in warfare, in sorrow and suffering, in conflict and conquest, in life and in death. 3. They were also companions. They were companions in friendship, like David and Jonathan; companions in love, like Paul and Timothy; companions in arms, as soldiers of the Cross. They had all the same cause, interest, and object; the same profession, conflict, and triumph; and the same cause, prospects, and glory. 4. The objects in which John was their brother and companion were three: the tribulation, the kingdom, and patience of Jesus. (1) He was their brother in tribulation. This supposes subjection to all the common calamities of life; we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. It includes persecutions for the sake of Christ. Of these the primitive saints had a large share. To be a brother and companion in tribulation includes sympathy with the afflicted. The fellowship of saints consists greatly in sympathetic feelings. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. (2) He was a brother and companion in the kingdom of Christ. Observe the connection between the tribulation and the kingdom of Jesus. If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of this kingdom. He is the King of Zion—the King of martyrs. As a King, he was prefigured by many an ancient type—Melchizedek was king of Salem; Moses was king in Jeshurun; Judah was the lawgiver from whom the Shiloh came. The kingdom was foreshadowed as well as the King. The people of Israel were a royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests. (3) The patience of Jesus Christ. This word includes a patient enduring, a patient waiting, and a patient persevering. 5. The exile of the apostle. His grace shall be sufficient for us; He will perfect His strength in our weakness. 6. It was for the sake of Jesus that John was now an exile; but He for whom he suffered was infinitely worthy; and John was ready to count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. (*Jas. Young.*) *The glorified Saviour* :—I. THE REVELATION TO THE IMPRISONED SAINT. Though confined on this prison-isle, the disciple of Christ was not left a prey to regrets or mournful contemplation about the failure of his own or his Master's work. Arabi Pasha from his coffee plantation in Ceylon contemplates without hope the decline of the arms of the crescent under which he fought and the nationality he defended. John Baptist from his dungeon in the Macherus when Christ was on the earth had sent to make sure that the Messiah had come; but this other John, though a captive, and a disciple of a departed Master, yet beheld the unmistakable marks of victory on that countenance shining as the sun in his strength. The restoration would not come in his day, but the victory was sealed. In the inferences we draw from startling events concerning the coming of the Lord to earth, there are some facts which should be borne in mind. One is the manifold increase of population and human activity with advancing years. There are bound to be with this enlarged area of civilisation a vast series of crises and combinations. Again, the means of communication are such that we read of all the world's calamities summed up in one day's journal. The occasions of trouble are multiplied by our very frequent contact with nations and individuals. We cannot infer, therefore, a disproportionate increase of evils because we hear of

them oftener than formerly. Our spirits chafe under the slow advance of reform according to the vernier scale when we wish for the yard measure standard of progress. But we are still with our brother John in the tribulation and patience period of the kingdom, and yet one of hope. II. THE FULNESS OF THE REVELATION TO A SINGLE SAINT. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." That was a magnificent service which was performed for that troubled soul on his seagirt isle that Sabbath day. The presence of one worshipper is sufficient to start the angelic choir, to secure the entrance of the high priest in his robes of ascended majesty. One troubled spirit requires the whole of the Divine ministry. The disciple of Christ who puts himself in the line with Divine commands, whatever his estate or humiliation, often finds the whole splendid ritual produced for him. It was the Lord's day when this mighty revelation came to the prisoner. He was in the spirit, though depressed and anxious. Many persons will stay away from church because of evils which have come or misfortunes in the family. But they thus fail of the very relief God has vouchsafed to those who seek to serve Him. The choicest blessings are for those who are in the line of appointed duty. The individual is not overlooked. We are taught here how in all the mighty movements of nations and the universe itself Christ has time to spare and disposition to care for His humble, persecuted disciples. III. THE CONTINUED STORY FOR THE WORLD. "Write therefore the things that thou sawest." After the personal revelation comes the permanent message for the ministry, the Church, and the world. There was to be a book and a commentary by the living One. Attention was here called to the value of permanent records of the Lord's will for the Church in all ages. The Bible was not only largely written by captives, but has been ever the prisoners' book. (*William R. Campbell.*) *Brother and companion*:—I. BROTHER AND COMPANION. He does not write as a lord over them, but as one of themselves. He is one of the many "brethren" in Asia; one of the "household of faith." He is no stranger, no master or ruler, but truly a part of themselves, who needed their sympathy and love even more than they needed his. Not a brother only, but a "companion": a co-partner with them in all things; a sharer with them in the same faith and hope, the same sorrow and joy. II. BROTHER AND COMPANION IN TRIBULATION. There was tribulation in the Churches then, as now; in some cases it was "much tribulation" (Acts xiv. 22), or "great tribulation" (chap. ii. 22, vii. 14). "Weeping endured for a night" (Psa. xxx. 5); for this is the night, and it is the time of tears. What John suffered, these Churches suffered; what they suffered, he suffered: for the sympathy between all the members of the body was quick and instantaneous in these days of love. Sympathy between the members of Christ's body is little known in these last days; so many non-conducting materials have prevented the communication. The world has come in; false brethren have come in; the members do not realise the vitality of their connection with the Head. The links are broken; the fine nerves that carried the spiritual feeling through every part have frozen or become insensible, if not dead. Who of us appreciates this deep, true spiritual union, with which no external unity can intermeddle, either to hinder or to help? III. BROTHER AND COMPANION IN THE KINGDOM. The kingdom belongs alike to all the members of the one body from the beginning. One in sorrow, one in joy; one in shame, one in glory; one in tribulation, one in triumph! IV. BROTHER AND COMPANION IN THE PATIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST. Until that kingdom come, there is need of patience; patience such as all the saints have shown in the days of their pilgrimage; the patience exhibited by the Master Himself; the patience of faith and hope; the patient waiting for the kingdom. Be patient unto the coming of the Lord. Be patient under wrong, and suffering, and weariness, and hope deferred. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.*—*The threefold common heritage*:—I. THE COMMON ROYALTY. John does not say, "I am going to be a partaker," but says, here and now, in this little rocky island of Patmos, "I yet, like all the rest of you, who have the same bitter cup to drink, I even now am a partaker of the kingdom that is in Christ." What is that kingdom? It is the sphere or society, the state or realm, in which His will is obeyed; and, as we may say, His writs run. But then, besides that, there is a wider sense of the expression, in which Christ's kingdom stretches all through the universe, and wherever the authority of God is, there is the kingdom of the exalted Christ, who is the right hand and active power of God. So then the "kingdom that is in Christ" is yours if you are "in Christ." Or, to put it into other words, whoever is ruled by Christ has a share in rule with Christ. His vassals are altogether princes. We rule over

ourselves, which is the best kingdom to govern, on condition of saying, "Lord, I cannot rule myself; do Thou rule me." So we do not need to wait for heaven to be possessors of the kingdom that God hath prepared for them that love Him. But while the kingdom is present, its perfect form is future. They used to say that in the days of the first Napoleon every French soldier carried a field marshal's baton in his knapsack. That is to say, every one of them had the chance of winning it, and many of them did win it. But every Christian soldier carries a crown in his, and that not because he perhaps may, but because he certainly will, wear it, when the war is over, if he stands by his flag, and because he has it already in actual possession, though for the present the helmet becomes his brow rather than the diadem. II. THE COMMON ROAD TO THAT COMMON ROYALTY. There are no short cuts nor bye-paths for the Christian pilgrim. There is "tribulation in Christ," as surely as in Him there are peace and victory, and if we are in Christ we shall be sure to get our share of it. The Christian course brings new difficulties and trials of its own, and throws those who truly out-and-out adopt it into relations with the world which will surely lead to oppositions and pains. It has not ceased to be a hard thing to be a real and thorough Christian. The law is unrepealed—"If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." But this participation in the tribulation that is in Christ has another and gentler aspect. The expression points to the blessed softening of our hardest trials when they are borne in union with the Man of Sorrows. III. THE COMMON TEMPER IN WHICH THE COMMON ROAD TO THE COMMON ROYALTY IS TO BE TRODDEN. Patience is the link, so to speak, between the kingdom and the tribulation. Sorrow does not of itself lead to the possession of the kingdom. All depends on the disposition which the sorrow evokes, and the way in which it is borne. We may take our sorrows in such a fashion as to be driven by them out of our submission to Christ, and so they may lead us away from and not towards the kingdom. The worst affliction is an affliction wasted, and every affliction is wasted unless it is met with patience, and that in Christ Jesus. A vivid metaphor underlies the word—that of the fixed attitude of one bearing up a heavy weight or pressure without yielding or being crushed. Such immovable constancy is more than passive. The true Christian patience implies continuance in well-doing, besides meek acceptance of tribulation. The first element in it is, no doubt, uncomplaining acquiescence in whatsoever affliction from God or man beats against us on our path. But the second is, continual effort after Christian progress, notwithstanding the tribulation. The storm must not blow us out of our course. We must still "bear up and steer right onward," in spite of all its force on our faces, or, as "birds of tempest-loving kind" do, so spread our pinions as to be helped by it towards our goal. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The efficiency of the passive virtues*.—Kingdom and patience! a very singular conjunction of terms, to say the least, as if in Jesus Christ were made compatible authority and suffering, the impassive throne of a monarch and the meek subjection of a cross, the reigning power of a prince and the mild endurance of a lamb. What more striking paradox! And yet in this you have exactly that which is the prime distinction of Christianity. It is a kingdom erected by patience. It reigns in virtue of submission. Its victory and dominion are the fruits of a most peculiar and singular endurance. We too commonly take up the impression that power is measured by exertion; that we are effective simply because of what we do, or the noise we make; consequently, that when we are not in exertion of some kind, we are not accomplishing anything; and that if we are too humble, or poor, or infirm, to be engaged in great works and projects, there is really nothing for us to do, and we are living to no purpose. This very gross and wholly mistaken impression I wish to remove, by showing that a right passivity is sometimes the greatest and most effective Christian power, and that if we are brothers and companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, we are likely to fulfil the highest conception of the Christian life. Observe, then, first of all, that the passive and submissive virtues are most of all remote from the exercise or attainment of those who are out of the Christian spirit and the life of faith. It is commonly not difficult for men to be active or even bravely so; but when you come to the passive or receiving side of life, here they fail. To bear evil and wrong, to forgive, to suffer no resentment under injury, to be gentle when nature burns with a fierce heat and pride clamours for redress, to restrain envy, to bear defeat with a firm and peaceful mind, not to be vexed or fretted by cares, losses, or petty injuries, to abide in contentment and serenity of spirit when trouble and disappointment come—these are conquests, alas how difficult to most of us! Accordingly it will be seen that a true Christian man is distinguished

from other men not so much by his beneficent works as by his patience. Consider also more distinctly the immense power of principle that is necessary to establish the soul in these virtues of endurance and patience. Here is no place for ambition, no stimulus of passion, such as makes even cowards brave in the field. Here are no exploits to be carried, no applauses of the multitude to be won. The disciple, knowing that God forgives and waits, wants to be like Him; knowing that he has nothing himself to boast of but the shame of a sinner, wants to be nothing, and prefers to suffer and crucify his resentments, and, since God would not contend with him, will not contend with those who do him injury. He gets the power of his patience wholly from above. We can act out of the human, but to suffer well requires a participation of what is Divine. Hence the impression of greatness and sublimity which all men feel in the contemplation of that energy which is itself energised by a self-sacrificing and suffering patience. And accordingly there is no power over the human soul and character so effective and so nearly irresistible as this. Notice again, yet more distinctly, what will add a yet more conclusive evidence, how it is chiefly by this endurance of evil that Christ, as a Redeemer, prevails against the sin of the human heart and subdues its enmity. Just upon the eve of what we call His Passion, He says, in way of visible triumph, to His disciples, "The prince of this world is judged"; as if the kingdom of evil were now to be crushed, and His own new kingdom established by some terrible bolt of judgment falling on His adversaries. It was even so; and that bolt of judgment was the Passion of the Cross. When law was broken, and all the supports of authority set up by God's majesty were quite torn away, God brought forth a power greater than law, greater than majesty, even the power of His patience, and by this He broke for ever the spirit of evil in the world. The new-creating grace of Christianity is scarcely more, in fact, than a Divine application of the principle, that when nothing else can subdue an enemy patience sometimes will. Again, it is important to notice that men, as being under sin, are set against all active efforts to turn them, or persuade them; but never against that which implies no effort—viz., the gentle virtues of patience. They provoke no opposition, because they are not put forth for us, but for their own sake. They fix our admiration, therefore, win our homage, and melt into our feeling. They move us the more, because they do not attempt to move us. They are silent, empty of all power but that which lies in their goodness, and for just that reason they are among the greatest powers that Christianity wields. Once more, it is important for every man, when he will cast the balance between the powers of action and of passion, or when he will discover the real effectiveness of passive good, to refer to his own consciousness. See how little impression is often made upon you by the most strenuous efforts to exert influence over you, and then how often you are swayed by feelings of respect, reverence, admiration, tenderness, from the simple observation of one who suffers well; receiving injury without resentment, gilding the lot of poverty and privation with a spirit of contentment and of filial trust in God; forgiving, gentle, unresisting, peaceful, and strong, under great storms of affliction. Let every Christian carefully observe his own consciousness here, and he will be in the least possible danger of disesteeming patience as a barren or sterile virtue, or of looking upon effort and action as the only operative and fruitful Christian powers. Let us notice some of the instructive and practical uses of the truth illustrated. 1. It is here that Christianity makes issue with the whole world on the question of human greatness. It works out the recovery of transgressors by the transforming power of sacrifice. And so it establishes a kingdom, which is itself the reign of the patience of Jesus. The whole plan centres in this one principle, that the suffering side of character has a power of its own, superior in some respects to the most active endeavours. And in this it proves its originality by standing quite alone. 2. The office of the Christian martyrs is here explained. We look back upon the long ages of woe, the martyr ages of the Church, and we behold a vast array of active genius and power, that could not be permitted to spend itself in works of benefaction to the race, but was consecrated of God to the more sacred and more fruitful grace of suffering. The design was, it would seem, to prepare a Christly past, to show whole ages of faith populated with men who were able, coming after their Master and bearing His cross, to suffer with Him, and add their human testimony to His. 3. We see in this subject how it is that many persons are so abundantly active in religion with so little effect; while others who are not conspicuous in action accomplish so much. The reason is that one class trust mainly to the virtues of action, while the others unite also the virtues of patience. One class is brother and companion in the kingdom and works of

Jesus, the other in the kingdom and patience of Jesus. 4. The reason why we have so many crosses, trials, wrongs, and pains, is here made evident. We have not one too many for the successful culture of our faith. The great thing, and that which it is most of all difficult to produce in us, is a participation of Christ's forgiving, gentleness, and patience. This, if we can learn it, is the most difficult and the most distinctively Christian of all attainments. Therefore we need a continual discipline of occasions, poverty, sickness, bereavements, losses, treacheries, misrepresentations, oppressions, persecutions; we can hardly have too many for our own good, if only we receive them as our Saviour did His cross. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*)

The kingdom of patience :—That is a very remarkable phrase—"the kingdom and patience." It might almost seem to be an arbitrary and fanciful phrase. And more than this, the two ideas would appear, to some minds at least, to be contradictory. Patience does not appeal to such minds as a kingly virtue, but rather as a commonplace quality befitting people of humbler rank. Impatience is somehow conceived as a king's privilege. The Bible puts this whole matter directly the other way. Kingdom, instead of being dis severed from patience, is bound up with it: the kingly virtues are all intertwined with patience and dependent upon it. This truth, when we come to examine it, is not confined to the region of Scripture or of religion. It is, in part at least, an every-day, business truth. It is a familiar enough fact that the great successes of the world have been won by hard and patient work, and not by inspired flashes; and we are beginning to have greater respect for the power of holding on than for the power of brilliant striking out. And, as in so many cases, Christ shows us how, in these familiar views, we have gotten hold of one end of a truth which runs up through the whole spiritual economy; a truth which takes the form of a principle: patience is kingdom. But if that principle is to commend itself practically to mankind it must be incarnated. Men will not believe it on the strength of mere assertion. In Jesus there are these two elements, dominion and patience. Now, I ask you to consider the peculiar trial of patience applied to a cultured mind and a pure character in contact with dense ignorance, wicked cruelty, intense bigotry, enormous conceit, and personal degradation in every conceivable form. Look at the matter, for instance, on its lowest side. Did you ever do a full day's work in a hospital, surrounded from morning until evening with the sick and wounded and dying? If you have, you know how weary in body you were when the night came. And yet your worst experience of that kind was but a faint shadow of many days in Christ's life, especially those in which He was pressed all day long by that fearful oriental crowd, thrusting their various ailments upon His attention. Wise and good men who devote their lives to the ignorant have nevertheless some compensation. They step out of their own congenial circle, where their character and thoughts are appreciated, and down into the lower circle; but they can step back again at intervals, and refresh themselves with the contact and sympathy of congenial minds. But this compensation was denied Christ. There was, indeed, a small band that loved Him, listened to Him, and believed in Him, but even these could sympathise with Him only to a very small extent. Nothing is more beautiful than the patience of Christ as related to His uncompromising fidelity to His standard of duty and of truth: His holding by His principles while He holds on at the same time to those slow, backward pupils in the school of faith and of self-sacrifice. Many a man, by his severe devotion to his moral ideals, cuts himself loose from other men. They admire his courage and consistency, but refuse to follow him; and a reason for this is often found in his impatience with their slowness. It was the patience of Christ which enabled Him to bate not one jot of His high claims and at the same time to lose none of those whom the Father had given Him. He could mourn over slow faith and uneducated conscience and low ideals of duty, yet He could go on teaching, and continue to wait long and patiently while they toiled slowly and painfully up toward His higher level. Once more let me briefly refer you to Christ's patience as shown in His method of securing friends and helpers. Most reformers, in their zeal to secure partisans, are willing to receive them under the influence of momentary enthusiasm. They are willing to have a man commit himself while his reason is unconvinced and only his fancy captivated. You cannot but observe how Christ guarded against this mistake, though His caution doubtless cost Him many followers. He had patience to wait for followers who should embrace His cause deliberately, from conviction; and in this light the plainness of His statements concerning the terms and consequences of His service are worth noting. Nothing is concealed. And now I should like to dwell upon the patience of Christ as shown in His waiting. Christ's mission, in its very nature, involved

long, patient waiting. It was the mission of a sower, sowing seed of slow growth. The harvest of Christ's ideas was not going to be reaped in three years nor in a hundred. He knew perfectly that He should return from earth leaving behind Him almost nothing in the way of visible results. He was content to await the slow growth of the gospel seed; to wait for the consummation of a sovereignty based on the spiritual transformation wrought by the gospel. His course in this stands out as the sublimest illustration of patience in all time, and stamps Him as the true King of the ages. Christ, therefore, by His own example, no less than by His word, commends to us this kingly virtue of patience. So, then, if you and I are expecting to win moral and spiritual dominion, this element must come to the front in our lives. Suppose we want to be good, truthful, pure in heart, single in purpose, Christlike in temper. Are these things wrought in us on the instant? No, you and I know it is not so. We know that each morning we wake to a twofold fight, with the world outside and with the self within. God help us if patience fail. God help us if there be not something within which keeps firm hold of the exceeding great and precious promises; which will not suffer faith to fail, that He that hath begun a good work will perfect it; which is not disheartened at slow progress, and which, spite of the tears and the dust, keeps our faces turned toward the place where we know the crown and the glory are, though we cannot see them. So, too, like Christ, we have a work to do among men. We shall not do it without patience. We must try and get a firmer hold of the great principle of Christ's life: "not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; and when we shall have gotten it clearly into our minds that our main purpose in life is not to be blessed by the world, but to bless the world, then we shall find ourselves on the road where every day and every hour will beget a prayer for the patience of Jesus Christ. Bearing, waiting, enduring—these do not seem to be means to kingdom; but if we aim at spiritual kingdom, dominion over our hearts, dominion over self, dominion over character—the kingdom of Jesus Christ—that and that only is the way to it. (M. R. Vincent, D.D.)

In the isle that is called Patmos.—*John in Patmos*:—"Whenever a man is sent anywhere for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, he is not in prison, he is not in Patmos only. Jesus Christ said "the Son of Man who is in heaven" at the very moment when He was sitting upon the earth and was visible to spectators; and so John might have said—I was in Patmos yet I was in heaven; in the body I was confined to a limited island, but in the spirit I was with my Lord in the sanctuary of the skies, lost in contemplation and adoration, and preparing to return to the earth with fuller equipment as a gospel preacher. (J. Parker, D.D.)

The influence of solitude and suffering upon a Christian life:—
I. TO MAKE IT TRULY SYMPATHETIC. "I John, who also am your brother." II. TO MAKE IT INTENSELY SAD. "And companion in tribulation." Not even aged apostles are exempt from sorrow. But while in this solitude, St. John was not wholly occupied with his own suffering; he remembered that of his fellow Christians. The companionship of pain will merge into the companionship of praise. III. TO MAKE IT SUPREME GODLY. "And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." IV. TO MAKE IT DEEPLY CONSCIOUS OF ITS INNOCENCE. "For the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." A consciousness of rectitude is always a soul-sustaining influence in periods of trial. V. TO MAKE IT SUBSERVE THE DIVINE PURPOSE. "What thou seest write in a book." God can make the wrath of persecutors, the tribulations of saints, to praise Him. Lessons: 1. That wicked men have a strange power of rendering sad the lives of the good. 2. That loneliness may augment the efficiency of ministerial work. 3. That the common sufferings of the Christian life should have a uniting tendency. 4. That God gives bright visions to tried saints. (J. S. Exell, M.A.)

Solitude for Christ:—1. See here how far graceless and profane persecutors may prevail against the servants of Jesus Christ. 2. Solitariness for Christ is not the worst condition. Christ can make up that another way, and if there be a necessity of withdrawing men from their duty: neither doth John lose anything by his banishment; for he finds more intimate communion with Christ, and gets more of His mind: nor doth the Church lose anything by it; for she gets this revelation of God's mind. If we believed this we would never go out of God's way to make up His work: for if He please to lay us by He knows how to make up that both to ourselves and God's people. The Christian Church is as much beholden to Paul's imprisonment in epistles, as to his liberty in preaching. 3. Honest suffering for Christ hath often with it the clearest manifestations of Christ. Folks that will continue faithful and bide by their duty through sufferings, they shall not only not be losers but gainers (1 Pet. iv. 14). (James Durham.) I

was in the Spirit.—*St John in the Spirit in Patmos*:—1. To be in the Spirit is to possess the Spirit. 2. The second thing referred to is the time of the vision: “The Lord’s Day.” It is His Day because it is the day of His Divine appointment. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice in it. And it is His day because He is the subject of it. His personal glory; His victory and triumph over death and the grave; His holding the keys of hell and of death; from the subjects of holy meditation on this blessed day. (*J. Young.*)

Inspiring influences:—I. **THE LORD’S DAY.** All days are His, but this belongs to Him by special right. 1. It is the memorial of His resurrection. 2. It eternises the sabbatic ideal. A day of fulfilment, completion, and rest. 3. It is the earnest of the ultimate enfranchisement of the race. A day of enlarged liberty and not of more stringent bondage. II. **THE SPIRIT’S DAY.** 1. It “takes of the things of Christ” and shows them unto us. 2. The entire being is uplifted and transformed. Inspiration is no fruitless ecstasy, no mere festival of the emotions; it is full of practical impulse, intellectual enlightenment, and moral purification. 3. Only “in the Spirit” can the Lord’s Day, especially the great Easter Day, be fully and profitably observed. (*St. J. A. Frere, M.A.*)

On the Lord’s Day.—*The Lord’s Day*:—What is the meaning of this expression, “the Lord’s Day”? Does it mean the day of judgment? Such a meaning would not serve St. John’s purpose here. He is plainly giving the date of his great vision, not the scene to which it introduced him. Does it, then, mean the annual feast of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead, our Easter Day? That day, as we know from the Epistle to the Corinthians, was observed in apostolic times. But it could hardly have served for a date; because in those days, as for some time afterwards, there were different opinions in the Church as to the day on which properly it ought to be kept. Does the phrase, then, mean the Sabbath Day of the Mosaic Law? God calls the Sabbath by the mouth of the prophet “My holy day.” And the language of the fourth commandment, “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,” might well seem to justify the expression. But there is no known instance in the New Testament of the Sabbath being alluded to except by its own name, “the Sabbath.” If St. John had meant the Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, he would certainly have used the word “Sabbath.” He would not have used another word which the Christian Church, from the days of the apostles downwards, has applied not to the seventh day of the week, but to the first. There is indeed no real reason for doubting that by “the Lord’s Day” St. John meant the first day of the week, or, as we should say, Sunday. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made that day, in a special sense, His own, by rising on it from the dead, and by connecting it with His first six appearances after His resurrection.

I. **THE FIRST PRINCIPLE EMBODIED IN THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD’S DAY IS THE DUTY OF CONSECRATING A CERTAIN PORTION OF TIME, AT LEAST ONE SEVENTH, TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.** This principle is common to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Christian Lord’s Day. “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.” “Keep the day holy”—consecrate it—so the precept runs. Such a consecration implies two things. It implies a separation of the thing consecrated from all others, and a communication to it of a quality of holiness or purity which it had not before. The day is to be unlike other days, and it is also to be marked by some positive characteristics which should proclaim its dedication to God. Now, to this idea of a special consecration of a section of time, it is sometimes objected that in a true Christian life all time is already consecrated. Does not this consecration of a section of time ignore the obligation to a service which knows no limits? The answer is, that the larger obligation of love is not ignored because the smaller obligation of duty is insisted on. All a Christian’s time is, properly, consecrated time. But, practically, in many cases, none at all would be consecrated, unless an effort were made to mark a certain portion of it off by a special consecration. And apart from its importance in the life of a servant of God, the public setting apart of a certain measure of time to God’s service, is a witness to God’s claims borne before the world, calculated to strike the imaginations of men. Such an observance makes room for the thought of God amidst the pressing importunities of business and enjoyment.

II. **A SECOND PRINCIPLE REPRESENTED IN THE LORD’S DAY IS THE PERIODICAL SUSPENSION OF HUMAN TOIL.** This principle is closely connected with that of the consecration of time. In order to make the day, by this particular prohibition, unlike other days; in order to make room for the acknowledgment of God on it, ordinary occupations are suspended. Here we have a second principle which is common to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Christian Lord’s Day. In the Old Testament a variety of

particular occupations are expressly forbidden on the Sabbath—sowing and reaping, gathering wood, kindling a fire for cooking, holding markets, all kinds of trade, pressing grapes, carrying burdens of all kinds; and in a later age the Pharisees and the lawyers added very largely to these prohibitions. It was against the Pharisaic perversions of the Sabbath that our Lord protested both by act and word, reminding His countrymen that the Sabbath was made for the moral good of man, and not man for the later legal theory of the Sabbath. But the broad principle of abstinence from labour, however it was caricatured in the later Jewish practice, was itself a sacred principle, and it passed on as such into the Christian observance of the Lord's Day. Thus the Sabbath and the Lord's Day agree in affirming two principles, the hallowing of a seventh part of time, and the obligation of abstinence from servile work on one day in seven. But are they identical? May we rightly, scripturally, call the Lord's Day the Sabbath? These questions must be answered in the negative. The Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day, while agreeing in affirming two principles, differ in two noteworthy respects. First, they differ, as has already been implied, in being kept on distinct days. The change was made because there was an imperative reason for making it. For the Lord's Day and the Sabbath differ, secondly, in the reason or motive for observing them. The Sabbath is the weekly commemoration of the rest of God after creation. It brought before the mind of the Jew the ineffable majesty of the great Creator, between whom and the noblest work of His hands there yawns an impassable abyss. Now, the Christian motive of observing the Lord's Day is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That truth is to the Christian creed what the creation of the world out of nothing is to the Jewish creed. It is the fundamental truth on which all else that is distinctively Christian rests; and it is just as much put forward by the Christian apostles as is the creation of all things out of nothing by the Jewish prophets. The Jewish Sabbath stands in the same relation to the Lord's Day as does circumcision to Christian baptism; as does the Paschal Lamb to the Holy Communion; as does the law in general to the gospel. It is a shadow of a good thing to come. It is only perpetuated by being transfigured, or rather it is so transfigured as to have parted with its identity. The spiritual consecration of a seventh part of time, the abstinence from labour, these remain; but the spirit, the governing motive of the day, is fundamentally changed. III. But here a third, and a last principle, comes forward, which is embodied by the day. And this third principle is, THE NECESSITY OF THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD. The cessation of ordinary work is not enjoined upon Christians, only that they may while away the time, or spend it in self-pleasing or in something worse. The Lord's Day is the day of days, on which Jesus our Lord has a first claim. On this great day every instructed and believing Christian thinks of Him as completing the work of our redemption, as vindicating His character as a teacher of absolute truth, as triumphing publicly over His enemies, as conquering death in that nature which had always hitherto been subject to the empire of death, as deigning, now that He has overcome the sharpness of death, to "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." And when the religious obligations of the day have been complied with, there are duties of human kindness which may well find a place in kind deeds and words to friends, in visits to the sick, in acts of consideration for the poor; all of these are in keeping with the spirit of the day. Above all, the day should be made—mark it well, parents and guardians—a bright, as well as a solemn day, for children—first solemn, but then and always bright; so that in after life they may look back on the Sundays of childhood as on the happiest days of youth. Among the thoughts which Sunday, more than other days, brings to us is the memory of those whom we have known and loved, and who have passed away—the memory of the dead. We do well to make the most of these thoughts. They are sent to us from above to enable us to prepare, after our measure, and by God's grace, to follow. But, as I have said, the mental atmosphere of a true Christian, on Sunday especially, is above all things an atmosphere of worship. He may think it right and reverent to say little; but the day says to him from its early dawn, "Lift up thy heart," and his answer is, "I lift it up unto the Lord." He is, in his way, like St. John, "in the Spirit." He sees the higher and the everlasting realities; he measures earth against heaven, and time against eternity, and poor, weak man against the almighty and everlasting Creator. Sundays such as these are to the human life like shafts in a long tunnel—they admit at regular intervals light and air; and, though we pass them all too soon, their helpful influence does not vanish with the day. It furnishes us with strength and light for the duties which await us, and makes it

easier to follow loyally the road which God's loving providence may have traced for each one of us, on towards our eternal home. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The Christian's Sabbath*.—I. A DELIGHTFUL ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO ARE THE LORD'S PRISONERS, AND WHO ARE HINDERED, IN THE MYSTERIOUS WISDOM OF HIS PROVIDENCE, FROM ATTENDING PUBLIC WORSHIP ON THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH. But the example of the beloved John hath, in the next place, a manifest application to those who are permitted to enjoy the privileges of public worship. II. IT IS THEIR DUTY TO BE IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY, AND IN HIS HOUSE OF PRAYER. III. THE DANGER OF THOSE WHO NEGLECT THE PRIVILEGE OF SABBATH ORDINANCES, AND FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLING OF THEMSELVES TOGETHER IN THE HOUSE OF PRAYER. Did it ever occur to you why the Creator made man in His own image and likeness, on the evening before the Sabbath? Let me say that surely it was thus done in order that His gifted creature might forthwith enter upon the observance of the Sabbath; that he might begin his life with that worship of the Most High which was the chief end of his being. It is related concerning one of the richest mines of Peru, that thousands passed over it without noticing the wealth beneath their feet, until at length a poor Indian, just falling down a precipice, snatched at a bush to save his life, and exposed a mass of ore, of which it appeared that the whole surface of the mountain was composed. If ye had attended in the house of prayer, and caught at the ordinances of the gospel, the treasures of the love of Christ would have been discovered, and they would have made you rich indeed. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *St. John's view of the Sabbath rest*.—This in truth is not his thought at all. His primary question is, not what he shall see, but whether he shall be fit for the sight. The arduous part of the work to him is not the opening of heaven nor the revelation of heaven; it is the preparation for heaven. He feels that what he needs before all things is the spirit of the sabbath. The question now is, What in the view of St. John is the spirit of the Lord's day—that spirit which the seer regards as essential and preliminary to any rending of the veil between earth and heaven. Every anniversary day requires its appropriate spirit. Without that spirit, nothing which happens outside will reveal anything to the spectator. The day of a Queen's jubilee requires the spirit of loyalty; without this, no streaming of flags will convey it to the eye, no blast of trumpets will communicate it to the ear. The day which commemorates a victory needs the spirit of patriotism; without this the roll of artillery is all in vain. The day which keeps the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth demands the spirit of poetry; without this the banquet has no significance. The sabbath is in John's view also an anniversary. It is the anniversary of creation and resurrection. It, too, can only be understood by its appropriate spirit. What is the appropriate spirit of this day as it appears to the seer of Patmos? Do we find in this passage any trace of the thought which lay beneath the words, and which led him to connect the visions of his book with the breath of the seventh morning? I think we do. I believe that, if we join the second clause of the verse to the first, we shall reach a luminous understanding of the idea which dominated the mind of the apostle, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." I take the explanatory clause to be the hearing of the trumpet behind him. The idea is clearly that of retrospect, looking back. Now, John's ideal of the sabbath rest is that of a satisfied past. It is the ability to look back and say, "It was all very good." Now, this view of the sabbath rest is borne out both by the Old Testament and by the New. In the book of Genesis it is described as God's rest from creation; but it is a retrospective rest. It is not the joy of prospect but the joy of memory. It is the looking back upon the work that has been done, and finding that it has been done well, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." In the New Testament the day has the significance of a triumph. It is the rest of the soldier who has fought the battle and ascended up on high leading captivity captive. Yet here again it is a retrospective rest. It is the triumph of a work done. The spirit of the Lord's day is the spirit of retrospective rest. We come next to ask, What is it that renders this the fitting spirit for the Apocalypse? We often think that our chief desire in seeking the rending of the veil is to get a glimpse of the future. In that we deceive ourselves. No man would be satisfied with such a revelation if he got it to-morrow. We want, not mainly a sight of the future, but a sight of the past. The desire of man in this world is not simply to feel that in another world it will be all right with him. He wants to feel that it is all right now. His hope is that in a future life the clouds of this will be, not simply rolled away, but explained. This was John's vision. He put himself in the spirit of the Lord's day. He

conceived himself to be standing in the seventh morning of creation, and looking back. He heard a trumpet behind him—the voice of the vindicating past proclaiming that it was all very good; and it was the sabbath of his soul. Now, I believe that psychologically St. John is right. I think that to our age, even more than to his, the greatest religious rest in the world is that which comes from the retrospect of history. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) *The Christian's Sabbath*:—I. AS A DAY OF DIVINE SANCTION. 1. The sanctification of the day of our Lord's resurrection by the new-covenant Church was prophetically notified by David when he wrote Psalm cxviii. 22–24. 2. The example of the apostles and early Christians carries with it the weight of conclusive authority. 3. The usefulness with which the observance of the Christian Sabbath has been attended is a full ratification of all it has claimed. II. AS A DAY OF HOLY EMPLOYMENT. 1. The Sabbath should be hallowed by the cessation of secular business and toil. In this respect it should strictly answer to the signification of its name, and be a day of rest. 2. The Sabbath should be hallowed by the careful avoidance of all frivolities, and all pleasures which do not advance the spiritual welfare. 3. The Sabbath should be hallowed by devotional attendance on the public worship of God. Nor must you imagine that an occasional attendance on the engagements of public worship is an adequate discharge of obligation. To be regular, to be punctual, to be devout—these must characterise your habits in the service of your God. 4. The Sabbath should be hallowed by performance of the relative and private duties of religion. III. AS A DAY OF CHRISTIAN GLADNESS AND ANTICIPATION. 1. Gladness, on this blessed season, must inspire every Christian mind. A source of joy exists in the events it commemorates. 2. Anticipation necessarily arises out of the nature of the institution. The Sabbath is emphatically, as it always has been, a type. We anticipate, from the rest of the Sabbath, that age so earnestly desired, when religion shall have completed her triumphs. "The Lord's Day" is a distinct memorial of the period, when the latter glory shall dawn; and when the incense of pure worship shall be offered to the living God from every kindred and tongue and people. (*J. Parsons.*) *Heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.—A great voice as of a trumpet*:—1. What John heard. It was "a voice." It was not a mere sound, but it was a voice. Words are the expression of thoughts, the language of mind, the utterance of the heart, and the wishes of the soul; they are the medium of mental and moral communication of man with man, of mind with mind. The voice of God is the utterance of His will, the revelation of His mercy, and the medium of Divine communication with man. 2. Whose voice was this he heard? It was the voice of the Son of Man, a brother and a friend. It was a voice infinitely gracious, unutterably tender, full of compassion. 3. What was the voice which the prophet heard? It was "a great voice." (1) It was great in its author, the great God and our Saviour. (2) It was great in its nature, its power and excellence, magnitude and mystery. (3) It was great in its subject, the plans and arrangements of providence and grace. (4) It was great in its design, to arouse the regards of a slumbering world. 4. What the voice resembled. It was "as of a trumpet." It was not a mere sound, but an articulate voice. It was as the voice of a trumpet, sonorous, powerful, solemn, and majestic; gracious, awful, clear, and commanding; giving forth a distinct and certain sound. It was as the trumpet of the God of Israel, the symbol of His presence. 5. Whence the voice came: "I heard a voice behind me." It came from behind as the voice of a Watchman, whose eye never slumbers, whose eye never sleeps. It came from behind as the voice of a Teacher: "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, or when ye turn to the left." (*J. Young.*) *Voices and visions from eternity*:—I. A WONDERFUL VOICE FROM ETERNITY COMES TO MAN. 1. The voice was marked by clearness. 2. By fulness. Is there any voice in nature equal to the voice of the old ocean—majestic, full, continuous, drowning all other sounds? II. A WONDERFUL PERSONAGE FROM ETERNITY APPEARS TO MAN. 1. The scene of the appearance. 2. Its characteristics. (1) Royalty. (2) Purity. (3) Penetration. (4) Firmness. (5) Dominion. (6) Victory. (7) Brightness. III. A WONDERFUL IMPRESSION FROM ETERNITY IS MADE UPON MAN. What were John's emotions? Was there amazement at seeing One whom he loved above all others, and with whom he had parted, some thirty years before? Was it dread? Was he terror-struck at the marvellous apparition? Was it remorse? Did the effulgence of its purity quicken within him such a sense of guilt as filled him with self-loathing and horror? Perhaps all these emotions blended in a tidal rush that

physically paralysed him for a while. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) What thou seest, write in a book.—*The two Bibles* (with Heb. x. 16):—Here are two Bibles, two Divine books. The first passage refers to God's writing through man upon parchment; this constitutes the book which we commonly call the Bible. The second passage refers to God's writing through the Bible by His Spirit on the human soul. Christianity in human life is better than Christianity in cold ink. Why? I. Because it contains the Divine THINGS, the other only contains the SYMBOLS. Divine virtues are not in the letter press, they are only represented there. But in the Christly life they themselves are breathing, operative, soul-fashioning forces. II. Because it is THE END OF CULTURE, THE OTHER ONLY THE MEANS. When men get into them the true spiritual graces, the moral principles and temper of Christ, they have realised the end of Divine training. The paper Bible is the means of this. III. Because it is SELF-OBVIOUS, THE OTHER REQUIRES EXPLANATION. A Christly life is a Bible that a child can read, that men of all tribes and languages can interpret. Not so with the paper Bible, it contains many things "hard to be understood." IV. Because it is IMPERISHABLE, THE OTHER IS TEMPORARY. The principles of truth, love, and goodness that are written on the human soul are not only indestructible in themselves, but the substance on which they are written is indestructible, it is eternal life. Conclusion: Prize the paper Bible by all means, but don't superstitiously worship it. Prize the Christly life, it is greater than all literature. (*Homilist.*) *Christian authorship in its higher moods*:—I. THAT IT WRITES UPON A HEAVENLY SUGGESTION. "What thou seest write in a book." 1. It does not write merely upon the suggestion of some interesting topic. 2. It does not write for the desire of popular authorship. 3. It does not write in the hope of financial remuneration. 4. It writes upon the prompting of a Divine impulse. II. THAT IT RECORDS CELESTIAL VISIONS. 1. It does not record the fancies of fiction. 2. It does not record the vagaries of philosophy. 3. It records the higher moral experiences of the soul. III. THAT IT WRITES FOR THE MORAL INSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH. "And send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia." 1. The Church needs the instruction of Christian authorship. 2. Christ requires that Christian authorship should seek the moral good of the Church. Lessons:—1. God commands good men to write books for the welfare of the Church. 2. Let men seek the higher moods of authorship. 3. Let us cultivate an experience of soul worthy of record. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Christ and literature*:—The first century of our era was by no means an unlettered age. Yet there is no point in which the contrast between the first century and the nineteenth is more striking than the place that literature takes. Now reading is not confined to a cultivated circle: it is a universal acquisition. This diffused power of literature is of very modern growth: its origin was in the invention of printing four hundred years ago, and its stalwart youth to-day is due simply to the cheapening of paper and the improvements in the processes of production. Its future is altogether incalculable. Now this vast change in the habits and the conditions of the world necessarily creates a number of problems which could not be alluded to in the New Testament, such problems as these: How should we read? What should we read? How are we to regard printed matter? What principles should regulate us in the use of it? Now it is to be observed that though the Bible can give no direct answer to these questions, the Bible by its very existence is in a certain sense the suggestion of an answer: for this ancient book is a proof that from the very beginning God laid claim to the human faculty of reading and writing for His own purposes. We find Jesus Christ in the text claiming the pen of a certain man in order that He may communicate with men through ages to come. From the recognition of this fact I want to pass to a very broad and general statement. Looking at the whole mass of printed and written matter with which the world at the present day teems, I propose that we should divide it into two parts, and of the one part we should say: "This is such that Christ said, or might have said, 'Write it,' such as He could approve and use, and that is such that you could not possibly conceive Him saying, either 'Write or read it,' such that it could have no *imprimatur* of His, and stands condemned in the light of His countenance." That stern edict of the Caliph Omar, commanding the library at Alexandria to be burnt, because, as he said, "If it contains what is in the Word of God, the Word of God is sufficient, and if it contains what is against it, it ought to be destroyed," has frequently been censured. But I would suggest that we actually take his recommendation, with a little modification, as the principle of modern reading; we may say, with regard to every book or paper or pamphlet that we wish to read, "Is this a thing about

which my Lord might have said, 'Write,' or even 'Read'? Then I propose to read it and understand it to the best of my ability. Is it, on the other hand, a writing of a kind concerning which He would have said neither 'Write' nor 'Read'? for me it shall be an unwritten book, a blank, illegible paper; by no means shall my eyes peruse it." First, consider the penetrating and insidious power of a printed page. Suppose it is bad, suppose it is corrupting; it comes before us with a quiet, demure, and decent aspect; nothing could be less aggressive, less dangerous than this; it may even be bound in the costliest binding and printed upon the best paper. Now, if a living companion approached us with the same corrupt influences in him as are contained in this innocent page, every decent mind would keep him at a distance, and would insist upon some satisfactory introduction. He would give more or less an indication of what he is, and as we got to see what he is we should decline his acquaintance. But this companion, this written page leaps into the breast at a bound; it is there at once unquestioned and uncensured; it is like that wooden horse which was introduced into Troy with the approbation of all the people, containing within its belly the armed men that were to be the ruin of the city, but not disgorging itself until it was well within the walls. But, on the other hand, suppose that the writing be good, consider what a winged and miraculous power this written thing possesses. It can fly where no human voice can reach it, can arrest and hold a man whom no human hand can touch, and when it has laid its spell upon him it will be like a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing of the bone and of the marrow. The Press is a great pulpit to-day, the greatest of pulpits. Those who have learnt to write at the bidding of Jesus reach a wider audience than could ever be assembled in St. Paul's or the Metropolitan Tabernacle. But another reason for a principle of selection arises from the simple fact that the printed literature of the world is so vast. None of us can read everything; and is it not, therefore, best to make up our mind that we will read all that is good? and if we go upon that principle, we shall not have time to read anything that is bad. But the principle of which I have been speaking is a little more specific, that we read only what Christ has said "Write," and refuse all the rest. Now, is it possible that some of you are afraid that in adopting this principle you would restrict your reading within very narrow limits, and is it possible, too, that some of you say, "How are we to know which things are in accordance with the literary censorship of Jesus Christ"? Let me point out that you need not be troubled by the narrowness of the literature that is thus suggested, and, secondly, that there is a very easy way of knowing which literature Christ approves. A good critic knows the mark of any well-known writer before he has gone half-way down the first page, and a good Christian seldom has to read more than two or three sentences before discovering whether that is a piece of Christ's literature or not. But in this matter of determining, I frankly admit that if you adopt my principle you will not always be in the fashion. It is no part of the Christian's duty to read a book because it happens to be in vogue. Again, if you adopt this principle, you will not find it necessary to read through your daily paper: you will read, perhaps, a good deal less of the daily paper than most people do read. But I said that the literature to be read on this principle is not limited as some people suppose. Let me tell you what it is. There is the Bible to begin with. There is another branch of literature that has to be read by Christians, the reports of the progress of the Master's kingdom, the news which comes from the front of the Lord's battle in the world. Then, leaving the Bible and the reports of the Master's kingdom, there is the noble pile of books on science; and I wonder if it has occurred to every one here that if, as the Bible teaches us, Jesus Christ is the Creator of this universe, every true fact about this universe is a record of Jesus Christ's handiwork? and, considering the incalculable mass of scientific detail to-day, no one can say that the literature is limited. Then there are all the accredited records of human history—an almost unlimited sphere of reading. Then, again, there are the poets—not all the poets, nor all of any poet, but you may mark this, that no poet of the first rank ever wrote but, when he gets into the higher region of his thought and utterance, he has become a mouthpiece of God. Then there are all the wise, true masters of thought in this age and ages that have gone by, so numerous, so great, and some of them even so voluminous that we are never likely to finish them; and then there are all the stories—I dare not call them novels, for the name has been defiled—but all the stories that have come from the pure and purifying imagination of great writers and thinkers, the mass of which very few of us have read. (*R. F. Horton, M.A.*)

Send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia.—*Things common in all the letters* :—I. CHRIST SUSTAINS A COMMON RELATIONSHIP TO THEM ALL. 1. The relationship of authority. The only Lord in the kingdom of souls. 2. The relationship of oversight. Christ knows all Churches, reads their inner heart, sounds the depths of their impulses. 3. The relationship of moral discipline. In all the letters there is commendation, rebuke, promise, threatening. His spiritual providence and power run through all. II. CHRIST SPEAKS THROUGH THEIR “ANGELS,” OR MESSENGERS TO ALL. III. CHRIST PROMISES GREAT BLESSINGS TO THE VICTORIOUS IN ALL. 1. The resistance of evil is the characteristic of all Christians. Other men may speak against evil—condemn evil in words; but the Christian resists it. 2. The resistance of evil must in all cases be personal. To be supposed that there can be any social or ecclesiastical resistance of sin as sin is a delusion. It is to Him “that overcometh,” not it. 3. The resistance of evil is a matter of difficulty. Every warfare implies difficulty, peril, enterprise, perseverance, and so forth. 4. The resistance of evil, though difficult, may be achieved. “To Him that overcometh,” &c. Thank God, in the case of every man evil may be overcome, and the triumph is one of the most blessed in the history of intelligent beings. IV. CHRIST DEMANDS ATTENTION TO THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT IN ALL. The “Spirit.” What Spirit? God. God in Christ’s ministry. (*Caleb Morris.*) *The seven Epistles compared* :—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THESE LETTERS COMMON TO ALL. 1. In all Christ assumes different aspects. 2. In all Christ addresses Himself through a special officer. 3. In all Christ declares His thorough knowledge of their moral history. 4. In all Christ promises great blessings to the morally victorious. 5. In all Christ commands attention to the voice of the Spirit. 6. In all Christ’s grand aim is spiritual culture. 7. In all Christ observes a threefold division. (1) A reference to some of the attributes of Him who addresses the Church. (2) A disclosure of the characteristics of the Church, with appropriate admonition, encouragement, or reproof. (3) Promises of reward to all who preserve in their Christian course and overcome the spiritual enemies who assault them. II. CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH SOME OF THEM DIFFER. 1. We find two (Smyrna and Philadelphia) who receive commendation. 2. Two (Sardis and Laodicea) are censured. 3. Three (Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira) contain mingled censure and commendation. In these cases the approbation precedes the blame, showing that it was more grateful to commend than to reprove. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *I saw seven golden candlesticks*.—*The seven golden candlesticks* :—1. The nature of the symbol. The Church is called a candlestick, in allusion to the candlestick in the ancient sanctuary—in allusion also to the exposition of the symbol given by the prophet (Zech. iv. 2-6); and on account of her own celestial light—she receives, resembles, embodies, and dispenses the light, glory, and gladness of heaven (Isa. lx. 1). 2. The precious material of which they are formed. They are golden candlesticks. The formation of the Church is the doing of the Lord, and marvellous in our eyes. The plan, the contrivance, the direction, and formation of the golden candlesticks were all Divine and heavenly; bearing the impress of the hand that formed them. They are called golden candlesticks, to express their intrinsic excellence, their purity and value, their glory and beauty, their splendour and their preciousness. They are called golden candlesticks, to express the estimation in which they are held by the family of heaven. 3. The form and number of the golden candlesticks. They were seven: There was but one candlestick in the ancient sanctuary, which represented the one Church of Israel—complete within itself. (1) The number implies the purity of the light; it proceeds from the pure celestial oil. (2) The fulness of the light; a plenitude of glory is poured from the Churches, to enlighten and cheer a dark world. (3) The power of the light; it has a power of holy influence and everlasting consolation; the power of sweet attraction. (4) The variety of the light; the beauty and variety of the colours of the rainbow meet and mingle here. (5) The unity of the light; there is a blessed unity without uniformity; although there are seven, they are all one; they have all one support, they are formed of one material, nourished by the same means. 4. The use and design of the seven golden candlesticks. The use of a candlestick is to receive, exhibit, and dispense the light. Now, the Church of Christ does this by her purity; her purity of doctrine, purity of communion; purity, simplicity, and spirituality of worship; and by her spiritual power to command heavenly purity. She does it by her testimony to the character of God, in the embodied form of Divine truth, in the pure essential doctrines of grace, and she does it by her efforts to publish the gospel; as a witnessing Church, in maintaining the truth; and a missionary Church, in dispensing

the truth throughout the whole world. (*Jas. Young.*) *The cedars and the candlesticks* (with Gen. iii. 8) :—The Book of Revelation is a mosaic, in which the previous parts of the Bible are brought together and formed into a new picture, illustrative of the fortunes of the Church and the world. As Genesis is the book of beginnings, so Revelation is the book of completions. 1. Between the two revelations of God to man which meets us respectively at the commencement and at the close of the sacred Scriptures, we find the closest connection. He who appeared to our first parents walking among the trees of the garden, appeared in vision to the beloved disciple in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks in the Isle of Patmos. The two Divine manifestations were essentially the same, although they differed in outward form and circumstances. Between them there were connecting links. The experience of the exile on Horeb, for instance, was repeated in the case of the exile in Patmos. The same vision of the burning bush which appeared to Moses appeared to John in the vision of the seven golden candlesticks. The Son of Man associated Himself with the one symbol in the same way that He had associated Himself with the other. The occasion in both cases was similar. The burning bush was never to be extinguished, it was to become a candlestick; and the fire of God's dealings with His people for their purification was to become a conspicuous light held aloft to lighten the whole world. The same truth is still further illustrated by the fact that the vision of John in Patmos was based upon the Jewish tabernacle and temple. Separated outwardly from the solemnities of the ancient worship—from the priesthood, the altars, the sacrifices, the festivals, the Hebrew Christians could still enjoy all that was most precious and enduring in the possession of their race. And the modification in the old form which the apostle beheld was itself full of significance. The single candlestick of pure gold, whose light illumined the holy place which was the pattern of the Church upon earth, appeared before John in the darkness and loneliness of his exile, multiplied into seven distinct candlesticks, as if each branch of the prototype had become a separate candlestick; in token that the original Jewish Church, which was one—the Church of a single people—had differentiated into a Christian Church, which while one as to its unity of faith and love, is also many as regards its organisation and individual life, the Church of all nations and people and tribes and tongues. And as the vision of Patmos was thus connected with the tabernacle and temple, and with the vision of Horeb, so we can trace them all back to the Adamic revelation, whose symbol was the tree of life in the midst of the garden. The difference between the living tree and the dead fuel on the hearth or in the lamp, is that the fire in the one, owing to the conserving power of the vital principle, is burning without being consumed; whereas in the other is the burning and consuming—reducing to dust and ashes, because of the absence of the vital conserving principle. The bowls which contained the oil were shaped like an almond-nut, the knobs looked like the flower buds, and the carved flowers resembled the fully-expanded blossoms of the almond tree. This tree was selected as the pattern of the golden candlestick, and as that which yielded Aaron's miraculous rod, because it is the first to awaken from sleep of winter, as its Hebrew name signifies. It was a symbol of the life of nature, rising in perpetual youth and beauty out of the decaying ruins of man's works. And so the Hebrew candlestick might be regarded as emblematical of the life of the Church, being the first to awaken out of the wreck of human sin, exhibiting its beauties of holiness and fruits of righteousness, while all around the world is wrapt in the winter sleep of spiritual torpor. 2. But between the revelation of Eden and the revelation of Patmos there are some striking points of contrast. The revelation of Eden was given in circumstances of peace and happiness. Nature was a faithful outward reflection of man's moral state. Its beauty and fruitfulness coincided with man's moral beauty and fruitfulness. But the revelation of Patmos was amid widely different circumstances. The symbol of it was not the tree that grew spontaneously by the laws of natural growth, but the candlestick wrought by human hands, with the sweat of the face. The gold of which it was composed was dug with toil and trouble from the mine, melted in the furnace, purified from its ore, and not cast into a mould, but beaten out of a solid piece with the hammer into the form in which it appeared. The oil for the light was also beaten from the olive berries grown, gathered, and expressed by human toil and skill; and the wick in like manner was a human manufacture made of the fine twined linen which formed part of the curtains of the tabernacle. The whole idea of the candlestick implied toil and trouble. And this is the great characteristic of the revelation of which it is the symbol. Everything connected with it indicates

salvation from sin through toil and suffering. Every image, every symbol and type in sacred Scripture, speaks of the curse of the ground and the sorrow of the soul which sin had brought into the world. This great factor is taken into account in all remedial schemes. The first promise to our race announces redemption through pain and toil and sorrow. The bruising of the serpent's head is to be accomplished only through the wounding of the victor's heel. The Levitical institutions disclose the painfulness of the covenant of grace in a most remarkable manner. Their limitations, their restrictions, their heavy burdens, their awful sanctions, their sacrifices of blood and death, all speak in the most impressive manner of the evil of sin and the costliness of the deliverance from it. And the life and death of our Saviour disclose this in a way still more solemn and emphatic. The trees of Eden in His case were converted into the Cross of Calvary; and the glorious fiat of the first creation, "Let there be light, and there was light," into the awful cry of darkness and death—the birth-pang of the new creation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks the beloved disciple heard Him saying, "I am He that liveth and was dead." In the midst of the throne, John, through his tears, saw "a Lamb as it had been slain." 3. Another point of contrast between the revelation of Patmos and the revelation of Eden is the clearness and fulness of the one, in comparison with the dimness and obscurity of the other. God talked with Adam not only among but through the medium of the trees of the garden, conveyed to him spiritual instruction by the objects and processes of nature around him. Religion meant to Him simply the knowledge, worship, and service of God as He was revealed by the objects and processes of nature; and on these points nature could give him all the light that he needed. But we have sinned and fallen, and religion to us includes, besides these elements, repentance of sin and dependence upon an atonement. Nature therefore cannot solve the awful doubts which arise in the human heart regarding the justice of God. "How shall man be just with God?" We need that He who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, should give us the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. God has given to us this special revelation, suited to our altered sinful state, in the economy of redemption.

4. And now we come to the last point of contrast between the revelation of Eden and the revelation of Patmos, namely, the transitory nature of the one and the permanence of the other. God appeared to our first parents walking among the trees of the garden. These trees were in their very nature evanescent. But, on the other hand, God in Christ appeared to the beloved disciple in Patmos in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; and these candlesticks were the symbols of the Word of the Lord which endureth for ever. The form and substance of these candlesticks indicated the imperishable nature of the revelation which they symbolised. They were all beaten out of solid gold—the most enduring of all earthly materials—the very pavement of heaven itself. They were carved with the figures of flowers and fruits, preserving the exquisite loveliness of the fading flowers and fruit of earth in an imperishable form. Thus they are appropriate emblems of the beauty and glory of the new creation of God, a creation, though new, yet founded as it were on the ruins of the old, fashioned of lasting and unfading materials, and yet combining all the beauty and glory of that which shall pass away. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

The seven golden lamps:—I. THE CANDLESTICKS. It is not so much to the light as to the utensil or stand for holding it that his attention is turned, for the light of these lamps is not from an earthly source, but from Him who is "the Light of the world." Israel, for ages, was the world's only light—a light confined within narrow boundaries; not diffused over earth, nor set upon a hill. Of this the one seven-branched candlestick in the tabernacle and temple was the symbol. The lamp-stand was doubly shut in—first, by the outer curtain, or wall of the house; and, secondly, by the inner curtain, or wall of the holy place. But now that lamp stands in uncurtained, unhidden splendour, shining out over all the world.

II. THE MATERIALS OF WHICH THE CANDLESTICKS ARE MADE. They are of gold. Generally in Scripture gold symbolises the holy, the perfect, the Divine. The Churches are "in God the Father, and in Christ Jesus, our Lord." They are not from beneath, but from above; they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. They are composed of men born from above. With Divine glory they shine; with Divine beauty they stand forth before the world, representing the surpassing and all-precious excellence of Him in whose beauty they are beautiful, and in whose perfection they are perfect. Golden Churches! Golden men! Golden witnesses for Christ and His truth! How far the Church of God in the past

centuries, since John wrote, has fulfilled the description, ecclesiastical history can tell. The age of gold was not a long one; and then followed the silver, the brass, and the iron. How much of gold is to be seen in the Churches of our day? III. **THE NUMBER OF THE CANDLESTICKS.** Seven—1. Perfection. As the one sunbeam is composed of seven parts, and thus perfected into whiteness, so seven is the Divine number of perfection, or completeness. 2. Variety. The manifold gifts of the one Spirit, sent from the one Christ. 3. Unity. Seven is oneness; oneness with diversity: one firmament, many stars. 4. Covenant-certainty. Seven is the covenant-number (Gen. xxi. 31). The Churches are the Churches of the everlasting covenant—the covenant between the Father and the Son—"ordered in all things, and sure." (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Vers. 13-20. In the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man.—*The Son of Man amid the candlesticks*.—**HIS WONDERFUL POSITION.** "In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." 1. This implies His presence with His people (Exod. xxxiii. 14, 15; Psa. cxxxii. 13, 14; Isa. xliii. 1, 2). He is in the midst of the golden candlesticks as the great High Priest, trimming, preparing, and lighting the lamps. 2. The symbol supposes communion and fellowship; He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. 3. The words imply Divine superintendence; His peculiar power and providence; His gracious inspection; His unceasing care. 4. The words are expressive of Divine operation. Jesus works while He walks; He is never idle. (1) He works by His Spirit. (2) He works by His providence. (3) He works by His judgments, as well as by His mercy. (4) The effects of Christ's working are manifold and gracious. The first effect is holiness. The next effect is happiness, everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. A third effect is glory: Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. 5. His presence implies the stability of the Church. He is in the Church as the God of nature, providence, and grace; and no weapon formed against her shall prosper. II. **HIS DIVINE PERSON.** 1. The human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ—"I saw one like unto the Son of Man." (1) The likeness. There is the likeness of resemblance: God sent forth His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was not sinful flesh, but He bare the likeness. There is the likeness of identity: He that was in the form of God was really God; He that was in the form of a servant was really a servant; and He that was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man, was really a man. There is also the likeness of equality: He not only took the nature of man, but his frail, afflicted, mortal state. And there is here also the likeness of representation: in His low and afflicted condition on earth, we have an image of man as a mourner and a mortal; and in His glorified condition at the Father's right hand, we have a representation of what the saints in heaven shall for ever be. As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (2) The reality of His human nature. Although comparison is here employed, yet the reality is implied in the comparison. The incarnation of the Son was an important part of the counsels of eternity. This great doctrine was taught by types and symbols. All his appearances to the holy patriarchs were preludes and pledges of His coming in the flesh. (3) The necessity of His human nature. As a Prophet, it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren; as a Priest, to be taken from amongst men; as a King, to be made of the house of David. Thus in the glorious description that follows, He appears in the likeness of the Son, and human members are ascribed to His Divine person. 2. The Divine nature of our blessed Lord. (1) The likeness of the Son of God. There is here, as in His human nature, the likeness of resemblance—He resembles God; He resembles Him in everything; He is the perfect image of the invisible God. (2) The reality of His Deity. (3) The necessity of His Deity. It behoved Jesus to be God as well as man, that He might be the Daysman between both parties; that His Deity might impart infinite value to His obedience and suffering and atoning sacrifice; that He might be the object of faith, hope, and confidence; and that His Deity might impart power and dignity to His intercession and His government. 3. The wonderful union between the Divine and human natures in His one Divine person; as Immanuel, God with us. He is both God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever. This union is ineffable, unsearchable, mysterious, and Divine. It is the great mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh. 4. The effects of this union. (*Jas. Young.*) *The Christ of Patmos*.—The Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Having neither beginning of days nor end of years, He is a priest for

ever after the order of Melchisedec. But the views which His people have of Him are extremely varied. According to our progress in grace will be the standpoint from which we view the Saviour; and according to the position from which we look at Him, will be what we see of Him. I. THE VALUE OF THIS VISION TO US.

1. It is a representation of the same Christ who suffered for our sins. 2. It represents to us what Christ is now. 3. It represents what He is to the Churches. 4. The effect it would have upon us if we really felt and understood it. We should fall at His feet as dead. Blessed position! We are never so truly living as when the creature dies away in the presence of the all-glorious reigning King. II. THE MEANING OF THE VISION. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *St. John's vision* :—

Ordinarily, if we would enjoy the Divine presence and blessing, we must seek them in the ordinances of Divine appointment. But the case is different when our absence from the public means of grace is unavoidable. God is not, in the bestowment of spiritual good, confined even to the means which He Himself has instituted. The truth of this St. John realised. I. EXPLAIN THE VISION WHICH ST. JOHN BEHELD, AND NOTICE ITS EFFECT UPON HIM. 1. The personage described as in the midst of the seven candlesticks was a representation of Him who was accustomed, while upon earth, to designate Himself, "The Son of Man." 2. St. John further describes His situation: He was in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. (1) This exhibits the character and duty of the Churches of Christ. They are candlesticks. Having been themselves enlightened from above, it is the duty of Christians to diffuse light. (2) The light which Christians are required to shed on the gloom of a sinful world is not their own, but a borrowed light. The light which they possess has been kindled within them by the Father of lights. (3) The care which Christ manifests towards the Churches. 3. The glorious Person who appeared to John is also described in His habit. He was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." The dress was sacerdotal. He is not only a prophet and a king but also an high priest. 4. In this representation of Christ He is more particularly described by the parts and members of His body. (1) "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." A hoary head denotes age; and may not our adorable Saviour be thus set forth as the "Ancient of Days"? (2) His eyes are described as "a flame of fire," clearly to denote His piercing knowledge. (3) His feet are described as "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This is symbolical of the power of Christ, which nothing can resist. Whatever opposition may be made to the Divine plans and proceedings, it will utterly fail. (4) His voice was "as the sound of many waters." The same simile is employed by the prophet (Ezek. xliii. 2). The roar of waters is powerful, and is heard afar. And so Christ will command attention. By the representation before us, He probably intended to signify that, however His words had been disregarded by the fallen Churches, they could not drown His voice. 5. The glorious Personage whom the apostle beheld in the vision is also described as holding in His hand seven stars. Stars appear when the sun has withdrawn himself; so Christian ministers are the ambassadors of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, praying men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Of what service are the stars to the mariner, as he sails over the trackless deep! The Christian is a mariner, voyaging over the sea of life, anxiously tending towards the haven of the skies, yet fearing lest he should make shipwreck of faith. The ministers of Christ are stars. Their peculiar office is to hold forth the light of God's truth, and, by their course in the world, by their life and conversation, to be examples and guides to their flocks. Christian ministers are stars, and have, therefore, orbits assigned them in which to move. The Head of the Church plants each in His proper place within it. 6. The protection which Christ affords to His ministers is also strikingly set forth in this description. He holds them in His right hand. He holds the stars in His right hand, and every one of them is immortal till His work is done. 7. Of the glorious Personage whom St. John saw in the vision, he says that there went out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword. This sword manifestly denotes the word of truth which Christ has spoken. If it fail to cut the heart of the sinner with conviction, it will pierce and destroy him. 8. In the vision under our notice, we have Christ represented as with a countenance like the sun shining in his strength. Oh, how changed from that visage which was so marred more than any man! II. DEDUCE ONE OR TWO SUITABLE REMARKS FROM THE SUBJECT BEFORE US. 1. The clearer the discoveries which Christ makes of Himself, the more humbled shall we be under a sense of our own vileness. 2. God vouchsafes special

comfort and support to those who suffer for His sake. 3. What cause will the enemies of Christ have to tremble, when He appears, in the last day, to judge them! (*W. Cardall, B.A.*) *The first scene in the great revelation:—*I. THE RECIPIENT OF THIS GLORIOUS REVELATION. “I John,” &c. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE FIRST SCENE WAS USHERED IN. 1. The fulfilment of the vision is guaranteed. “I am Alpha and Omega.” God will ever live to carry on His work. 2. The permanency of the revelation is implied. “What thou seest, write.” 3. The universal reference of this revelation is expressed. III. THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCENE ITSELF.

1. The Saviour's relation to His Church. (1) He occupies a central position, “in the midst of the seven candlesticks.” This was a position of authority and honour. (2) He assumes a brother's form. This was intended for the comfort of the saints; for while the Saviour wore a brother's nature, He would retain a brother's heart. (3) He performs the office of an intercessor. Long robes were worn by men of lofty station: but the girdle seems to refer to the priest's official robe. 2. The Saviour's relation to the opponents of His cause. (1) His supreme authority. The white hair is intended to remind us of the knowledge, experience, and authority of age. (2) His clearness of vision. Not a tear was ever shed, but the eye of Jesus saw it; not an act of cruelty or of crime was ever perpetrated, but the Saviour marked it in His book. (3) His irresistible force. He can tread to dust His fiercest foes. (4) His terrible majesty. Nothing is more majestic than the crash of the cataract. Those who have seen the Fall of Niagara never can forget the impression it made upon the mind. 3. The Saviour's relation to Christian enterprise. (1) The safety and guidance of His agents. “He had in His right hand seven stars.” (2) The power of His word. “And out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword.” The two edges show the manifold effects of Christian teaching. (3) The unsullied glory of the Saviour. Whatever happens, the glory of Jesus will never pass behind a cloud. No greater comfort can the Christian find than this. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*) *The introductory vision:—*I. John mentions THE DAY ON WHICH THIS VISION OCCURRED: “the Lord's Day.” The loss of the Sabbath was felt by John in Patmos. Our pleasures brighten as they take their flight. This is particularly the case with the experience of Christians in relation to the Sabbath. II. The apostle alludes to his FRAME OF MIND at the time this vision was given him: “I was in the Spirit.” The blessing of God comes in the use of His appointed means; and supernatural communications begin where the highest effort of ordinary grace ends. God honoured His Sabbath, and He honoured the prayerful endeavours of His servant, by His revelations at that time. There is a spirit of the Sabbath which all believers should seek to attain, and which, when cultivated to the utmost, will bring them well nigh to the borders of inspiration, and to the gate of heaven. III. We come to the FIRST SUPERNATURAL SIGN. “And heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying,” or as of a speaking-trumpet, the epithet “saying” agreeing not with the “voice,” but with the “trumpet.” Such an instrument was much in use amongst the ancients. It was employed by generals to give orders to their armies. The brazen lungs of Stentor, mentioned by Homer, in the wars of Troy, were probably of this kind. Hence the “voice of a trumpet” is used in Scripture for a loud and authoritative word of command. IV. THE LANGUAGE HE HEARS. How important it is to note down impressions as they occur! How needful, for correct preservation, to record them at once! Our memories are treacherous. New scenes arise to obscure the deepest impressions in our minds. V. THE VISION HE BEHOLDS. “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.” The true reason why natural beauty and tasteful proportions are disregarded in the image before us is, that it is solely of a hieroglyphical character. Hieroglyphics have no pretension to beauty. Symmetry is the last quality that is studied in their construction. In conformity with this method of instruction, we have the image assumed by Christ in vision to John, with this difference, that it is given only as a hieroglyphical representation, and not as a delineation of His real form. The value of hieroglyphics lies in their meaning, and their beauty in their design. What beauty could our first parents see in the imagery by which their restoration was promised, apart from the design? What beauty was there in the serpent of brass, in the altar of burnt offering, in the figures of the cherubim, in themselves considered? What glory is there in the Cross, apart from its design? What beauty in a Lamb as it had been slain, even in the midst of the throne? What is there to gratify the eye, the ear, or the taste, in the only relics of a symbolical ritual, in baptism and the Lord's Supper? We have here the utmost simplicity of emblems combined with the highest grandeur of design. Visible signs are employed

to lead to the contemplation of invisible realities. Under these impressions, we turn again to the vision before us. We expect now no external loveliness and attractions, and are prepared to look for its whole beauty in the moral sentiments it inspires. His appearance, as when known to John in the flesh, would have been equally incompatible with the purpose and the time. He assumes the very figure the occasion required. It was modelled by the revelations He came to unfold. It was not His natural dress, but His adornment for a particular interview; not His home attire, but His equipment for a special expedition. It is not the beau ideal of the Christian's God, but the symbolical representation of the means by which His kingdom would be established in the whole earth. If the whole aspect had been mild and alluring, it would have given a false impression to John of what it was intended to prefigure and the purpose for which it was assumed. It revealed the combination of those perfections in Christ which would be required; the resources at His command, His unslumbering zeal, His terror in battle, the certainty of His conquest, the serenity of His government, and the glory of His reign. The high priest's breast-plate is associated with the warrior's coat of mail, the snow-white locks of age with the sparkling eye of youth, unconquerable prowess with melting pity, the awfulness of justice with the endearments of love, the thunder of His arm with the radiance of His smiles. (G. Rogers.)

The power of an objective faith:—If we were asked to fix upon the most prominent want in the spiritual life of the present time, we might perhaps not untruly say that it is the want of objective faith. Visions pass before us, and we believe that in them is our life, but where is the entranced consciousness of their reality? Where is the fresh, warm faith which ever sees One like unto the Son of Man moving amid sacraments, and taking the shape of human symbols? Where is the rapturous conviction that pierces at once through the veil of visions, and sees the well-known features by a perpetual inspiration? And yet, this is undeniably the character of the faith which has drawn the soul to God at all times. If we consider the practical bearing of this great truth, we shall see its efficacy to be of the most momentous kind. 1. And first, it is the true sustaining power of the spiritual life. 2. Again, as objective faith is the sustenance of spiritual life, so is it the true antidote of one of the greatest dangers which beset the soul in times of strong religious excitement—that of morbid self-contemplation. Remorse, terror of conscience, growing scrupulousness, deepening awe at the sanctities of religion—all tend to fix the eye of the awakened soul on itself in a minutely introspective, anxious study, which tends to despondency and alarm, and, sadder still, depressing the soul's energies, creates fresh hindrances to restoration and to peace. The remedy is to be found in an objective faith. Combine with the care of the soul a deeper care to realise the presence of Him in whom it lives. This vision of His love is the counteracting stay. The soul looks safely on itself, if it look still more earnestly on its God. The one vision is the true complement of the other. 3. Once more: the same truth holds good as to our progress in any single grace. We gain more by looking on what is perfect than by striving against what is imperfect. One of the strongest laws of our nature is the law of imitation. We grow into what we behold. St. Paul is only expressing this great law of assimilation in its highest reality, when he says that, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Objective faith is therefore the ordained process in the perfecting of the inner life. We subdue our pride not by mourning over it, but by feeding on the lowliness of Jesus. We learn how to give way to others by contemplating His self-sacrifice. Anger has no power over us, while He who was smitten on the cheek is vividly before our mind. We are stronger to bear pain while we look on the Crucifixion. In conclusion: The catholic principle of life is Christ revealed to the soul. His work in us is the impression of the look on which we feed. Our likeness to Him is the reproduction in us of the features of a Countenance towards which we are continually turned. We live by going out of ourselves; we become what we look upon. "We live by faith; not by sight." We are what we believe. As some of the lower creatures change their colour according to the food on which they feed, so are we transformed by that which we have received within as the daily food of our soul's communings. The realities in which we learn to live become our own real life. (Canon T. T. Carter.) With a garment down to the foot, and . . . a golden girdle.—*The world's great High Priest*:—I. THAT THE SON OF MAN, WHO WAS ON THE EARTH, IS THE WORLD'S HIGH PRIEST. 1. The apostle saw the ascended Saviour as the High Priest of men. 2. The apostle saw in the High Priest of men the tokens of His

human Incarnation. II. THAT CHRIST IS FROM THE GREAT ETERNITY. "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." 1. As from the great Eternity, Christ can give men counsel. 2. As from the great Eternity, Christ should win the reverence of men. 3. As from the great Eternity, Christ is the pattern of men. III. THAT CHRIST IS MOST PENETRATING IN HIS SCRUTINY. "And His eyes were as a flame of fire." 1. That Christ is most penetrating in His scrutiny of the creed, conduct, and activity of His Church. 2. He scrutinises with terrible wrath the conduct of the enemies of His Church. IV. THAT CHRIST IS MOST UNWEARIED IN HIS PURPOSES. "And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." 1. Christ is unwearied in His purpose of love toward His Church and Gospel. 2. Christ is unwearied in His purpose of moral retribution toward the enemies of His Church. V. THAT CHRIST IS MOST SUBLIME AND EFFECTIVE IN HIS UTTERANCES. "His voice as the sound of many waters." "Out of His mouth went a two-edged sword." 1. The voice of Christ is majestic. It is as the resounding of many waters. 2. The voice of Christ is diffusive. The sound of many waters can be heard at a great distance, in almost any direction. 3. The voice of Christ is piercing. It is like a two-edged sword. VI. THAT CHRIST IS SUPREME IN HIS BENEFICENT GLORY. "And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." 1. Because of the glorious majesty that is in Him. 2. Because of the influence He exerts upon growth. 3. Because of the joy He inspires. Lessons: 1. That Christ is the hope of His Church in time of persecution. 2. That soul-visions are given to men at times of holy communion with God. 3. That the world has a Divine High Priest. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *The offices of Christ continued in heaven*:—1. The authority and warrantableness of our Lord Jesus Christ's kingly and princely office, as that which followeth, doth of His prophetic office: hereby letting us know, that our Lord Jesus's being in heaven and in glory hath not made Him lay by His offices, or the executing of them; but He remains King and Priest for ever (Psa. cx.): even in heaven He bears His offices to His Churches. 2. That our Lord Jesus Christ, not only bears these offices, but in an excellent and glorious manner. There is no such king, no such priest, no such prophet as He. 3. It holds out that our Lord Jesus's stateliness and glory doth not mar nor hinder Him in the application of His offices, and executing them for the good of His Church. Christ's greatness and glory is so far from unfitting Him for the discharge of His offices, that He hath robes compacted, and Himself so fitted, as He may handsomely go about the discharge of them, being still girded, though the girdle be of gold. (*James Durham.*) *His head and His hairs were white.—The exalted Saviour*:—1. "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." There is here an allusion to Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days (Dan. vii. 9-13). (1) His head of snow is the symbol of eternity. It implies the perpetual existence of His Godhead. (2) His hoary head is the symbol of sovereignty. (3) The hoary head is the symbol of wisdom. This is closely connected with His crown. (4) His head, and His hairs of wool and snow were symbols of His essential holiness and immaculate purity. His beauty is the beauty of holiness, His crown is the crown of purity, His sceptre is the sceptre of righteousness. The best and fairest of the sons of men have their spots or stains; but He is pure, perfect, and unsullied. (5) The head of snow is the symbol of glory. The word "white," is shining or resplendent; it is silvery, glistening; shining like lightning, it is radiantly bright, pure, white, effulgent, expressive of the purest splendour. 2. "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (Dan. x. 6). His eyes are the symbol of His Deity or omniscience. His knowledge is absolutely perfect and infinite. (1) The words imply the splendour of His knowledge. He not only beholds all objects, and every object, but His eyes shed a splendour on everything He sees. (2) The words imply the purity of His knowledge. He beholds holiness with infinite delight. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and He cannot look upon sin. He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. (3) The words imply the minuteness of His knowledge. 3. "And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This is the symbol of the Deity of Christ, His Divine power, His glory and majesty, His eternity and immutability. It is the symbol of His gracious presence with His people. 4. "And His voice as the sound of many waters." There is a twofold voice attributed to Christ—the voice of His mercy, and the voice of His majesty. 5. "And He had in His right hand seven stars." Stars are symbols of rulers, who are of two classes—civil and sacred. We proceed to consider the next symbol mentioned, the "right hand" of Christ. The right hand is

the symbol of wisdom. God's hand and His counsel are synonymous terms: it is the symbol of power—"Thy right hand is become glorious in power." It is the symbol of honour. It is the symbol of favour: The man of God's right hand is the Son of His love. It is the symbol of comfort: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is the symbol of security: The child was caught up to the throne of God, beyond the reach of every foe. It is the symbol of mercy: "God saves by His right hand, and the arm of His strength." 6. "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." There is, as we have seen, a twofold view of the voice of Christ: the voice of His majesty, and the voice of His mercy. It is the last of these that is here intended. (1) Why is the Word compared to a sword? The Word is compared to a sword, to express its keen and penetrating power, its blessed properties and mighty operations. It has a moral power to touch the heart, to impress the image of the truth upon the mind, to lead the sinner to look with holy mourning on Him whom he hath pierced. (2) The Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit, because it was indited by the Spirit; because it is employed by the Spirit; because it is blessed by the Spirit, in its sweet and gracious influences; because it is explained by the Spirit—He that inspired it is the best and the only infallible expositor; and, finally, because its gracious effects arise from His powerful operation on the soul. (3) It proceeds out of Christ's mouth, as the only-begotten Son of God came forth from the bosom of the Father to reveal Him. (4) It must be used and improved by every child of God. (5) What are some of its wonderful effects? There is a twofold effect of the Word of God—one of mercy, and one of judgment. 7. "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (1) There is majesty in the symbol. (2) There is might in the symbol. (3) There is mercy in the symbol. What a blessing to creation is the influence of the sun! What a blessing to the universe is the Sun of Righteousness, arising with healing and salvation in His wings! (4) There is beauty in the symbol. The sun is the loveliest object in creation. And who can express the beauty of the Saviour? (5) It is also the symbol of His favour and His love. When the face is mild, placid, and serene, like the sun without a cloud, it is the index or emblem of favour and affection. (6) It is the symbol of anger as well as of love: "The face of God is set against them that do wickedly." (7) It is the symbol, in a word, of knowledge, of holiness, and happiness. Thus the Sun of Righteousness shines upon the saint, and pours the marvellous light of His glory, in incomprehensible sweetness and majesty, upon the weary pilgrim in passing through the wilderness. (*Jas. Young.*) *The white hair of Jesus*:—I will tell you of the sorrow, the beauty, and the antiquity of Jesus. 1. There is nothing that so soon changes the colour of the hair as trouble. Well, surely, Jesus, my Lord, had enough suffering to whiten His hair. 2. My text sets forth the beauty of Christ. Whimsical fashion changes its mind very often as to which is the best colour for the hair. The Romans sprinkled theirs with silver and gold. Our ancestors powdered theirs white. Human custom decides this and declares that; but God declares that He likes frost colour best when He says: "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." 3. The antiquity of the Jesus. It is no new Christ that has come. He saw the first star beam on the darkness, the first wave swing to its place, and He heard the first rock jar down to its place in the mountain-socket. "His hair is white as the wool, as white as the snow"—an aged Christ. Ah, that gives me so much confidence! It is the same Jesus that heard David's prayer—the same Jesus on whose breast John laid. You cannot bring Him a new case. He has had ten thousand cases just like it before. He is an aged Christ. There are times when we want chiefly the young and the gay about us; but when I am in deep trouble give me a fatherly old man or a motherly old woman. More than once in the black night of sorrow have I hailed the grey dawn of an old man's hair. When I want courage for life I love to think of Christ as young and ardent; but when I feel the need of sympathy and condolence I bring before me the picture of an old Jesus: "His hairs as white as the wool, as white as the snow." Is there not a balm in this for the aged? (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *His eyes were as a flame of fire.*—*Christ the Truth*:—Fire is the element used to consume; and when we think of our Master's character in the light of that fiery vision, what do we see? Well, putting it into the plain language of every-day life, what St. John must have remembered, and what you and I must remember, is not so much the actual authority of the Judge as the innate sincerity of Christ. Christ

was true. He never flinched from the entirety of truth. He met philosopher and Pharisee and Sadducee as He met all others, with perfect calmness and decision; but with firmness and without relenting He dragged out their contemptible baseness of thought and purpose, and set it out in the sunshine before the eyes of all, and said to them all, "Oh, ye hypocrites!" And when He met those who talk about the religion of impulsiveness and not the religion of principle—with the men whose religion varied with every breath of public opinion, who held no truth long, who grasped this thing as being very useful to-day, and flung it to the winds this day week—with this sort of people He dealt, to their intense and surprised mortification, in order to wound their consciences and teach them that religion requires permanent self-denial. And when He met the soul which was at least approximately near to Him, the soul that felt and acknowledged its sin, and did not play a part, or put on airs, or have a stately gait or philosophic mind—to that soul He was tenderer than a woman, kinder than the truest friend, bringing to that soul the bright lights of hope and the stars of eternity; no trace of scorn then, no anger. And so He went through the world; dragging out the defects of the unreal, condemning the falsehood of His friends, and this at the risk of all His popularity. Christ never flattered, never bowed down to human opinion; knowing what was in the mind He was ever true and sincere. I want you to meditate upon that example, to meditate upon His force of sincerity as it touches us. Now apply that truth and sincerity to the judgment. Christ is coming, Christ shall judge us. Apply that character to the judgment. The last judgment, so Scripture tells us, will be the unfailing, true, righteous judgment of God. God's judgment—the judgment of the coming Christ—is discriminating with fine accuracy; it deals with facts, and not with professions of heart, as we shall know in that last hour. Christ shall save us because He is true. "His eyes are as a flame of fire." And then remember that it shall be a judgment when He shall show whether our confession was true. (*Canon Knox Little.*) **And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.**—*The administration of Christ*:—By our feet we move from one place to another, that we may execute the purposes which we have formed. The feet of Christ, then, are descriptive of His execution of His designs by the dispensations of His grace and providence—more especially of the signal manifestations of His glory in seasons of difficulty and danger. 1. This symbol exhibits to us the stability of the kingdom of Christ, and the energy of His government. The great cause of the stability of Christ's kingdom amidst all attempts to shake and subvert it, is the invincible energy of His administration. "His feet are like fine brass." He has fixed His plan of government with infinite wisdom, and He carries it into full effect. No circumstances can occur to thwart or disappoint Him. 2. The absolute purity of the administration of Christ. "His feet are like fine," or polished, "brass, burning," purified, "in a furnace." Men, indeed, have attempted to defile His purity and to sully His spotless character. They have clothed Him with the most detestable attributes. They have accused His administration of folly and injustice. They have invoked His sacred name to prosper plans of iniquity, and to sanction the most unhallowed usurpations. No; still "His feet" are pure and bright "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." 3. The administration of Christ abounds with splendid and stupendous displays of His glory. His reign suffers no interruption, and with perfect wisdom and righteousness He invariably administers His great kingdom. His enemies, however, sometimes think that He has abandoned the reins of government, and is indifferent how things are conducted. They feel and act as if they were without superintendence and control (Psa. xciv. 5-7). The ungodly rejoice. The neglected and suffering saints become fearful and despondent. But there are seasons in which the King of Zion gloriously appears, fulfilling promises and executing threatenings, working salvation for His Church, and easing Himself of His adversaries. 4. Christ is continually making progress in accomplishing His wise and holy purposes. He is ever carrying forward His great plan of mercy and of judgment. 5. Let us make the administration of Christ the subject of our devout study. The knowledge which we shall thus acquire of His character, the confirmation which we shall thus receive to our faith, will amply reward all our pains. (*Jas. Stark.*) **His voice as the sound of many waters.**—*The voice of Christ*:—Many have supposed that there is here an allusion to the sound of a cataract. The reference, however, appears to be, not to the roar of a waterfall, but to the motion of the tides. The voice of the Son of God speaking in the gospel may, for various reasons, be compared to the sound of many waters. I. It is

NEVER ALTOGETHER SILENT. How many are employed, in almost every quarter of the globe, in proclaiming the message of mercy! As the noise of the seas is created by a multitude of separate waves, so the glad tidings of great joy are announced by a multitude of individual heralds. II. THE VOICE OF CHRIST IS ADDRESSED TO ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. As we stand upon the beach, we may have something like a community of feeling with the inhabitants of the most distant climes; for the waters of the same great deep wash the shores of all the continents of the globe, and speak in the same tones of mystery and magnificence to all the sons and daughters of Adam. It may be said of the ebbing and flowing tides, as of the other works of creation and of Providence (Psa. xix. 3, 4). And the love of Christ is expansive as the broad ocean; for He sends forth His invitations of mercy to every kindred and people and nation. The inhabitants of the various countries of the globe cannot understand each other's speech, as every province has its own tongue or dialect; but the noise of the seas is a universal language, proclaiming to all the power and the majesty of the ever-living Jehovah. And how delightful to anticipate the period when the harmony of the heralds of salvation will be as the sound of many waters, when the same truths will be echoed from shore to shore, and when the uniform reverberation of the tides will be emblematic of the one gospel preached among all nations! (Isa. lii. 8). III. THE VOICE OF CHRIST IS FITTED TO INSPIRE US WITH AWE AND REVERENCE. There is something in the very aspect of the ocean which expands and elevates the mind. Almost every one is constrained to be serious as he stands solitary on the strand, and looks abroad upon the world of waters before him, and listens to the ceaseless agitation of the far-resounding surge. The shoreless sea is the mirror of infinite duration; and as the floods lift up their voice, we feel as if they were repeating their commission from the High and the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity (Psa. xxix. 3, 4). It is thus, too, with the gospel (Psa. cxix. 161). The truth as it is in Jesus has a self-evidencing power—it commends itself to the conscience—it carries with it a conviction that it is a communication from heaven. IV. THE VOICE OF CHRIST IS BY MANY DISREGARDED. How few, as they pass along the beach, ever think of listening to the dashing of the waves! Some may mark their various murmurs, and their magnificent echoes, and, ascending in thought to Him who formed the seas, and who sendeth the wind out of His treasures, may contemplate with adoring wonder the glory of Jehovah; but upon the mass of individuals the noise of the many waters makes no impression. And it is thus, too, with the gospel. How many make light of the great salvation! How many listen to the joyful sound as to a matter in which they have no interest—even as to the noise of many waters! (W. D. Killen, D.D.)

He had in His right hand seven stars.—*Lessons from the Christ of Patmos*:—I. THE POSITION OF INSTRUMENTALITY IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD JESUS. "He had in His right hand seven stars." God has ordained that there shall be men anointed of His Spirit, who shall, beyond others, be the means of conversion and edification, and these are as stars in the sky of the Church. 1. Note well, that instrumentality is of temporary use, and is intended for the time of darkness. The Lord will use instruments till He Himself appears, but even those whom He calls "stars" are only the transient apparatus of a passing night. 2. This should make us think very humbly of ourselves; for this illustrates our weakness. Were we lights of the first magnitude, the darkness would no longer remain. 3. Still, instrumentality is honourably spoken of by Him whose judgment is supremely wise. The Lord Jesus does not despise the agency which He employs. 4. Stars are guides, and so are the Lord's true ministers. Some stars in yonder sky have done measureless service to wanderers over the trackless deep, and to those who have lost themselves in the labyrinths of the forest. 5. A certain star, the morning star, is also the herald of the day. Happy messenger of God, who has the sound of his Master's feet behind him. 6. It is an honourable comparison that the instruments of God's good pleasure have put upon them in being compared to stars; for the stars are the comfort and solace of the night. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings!" 7. Instrumentality is honourably placed; for we see the stars in the right hand of Him who is the First and the Last. They may be despised by those who oppose the Word, but they need not be ashamed; for while the right hand of God is their position, they are more honourable than the princes and kings of the earth. 8. See, also, how true instrumentality is graciously sustained. The chosen servants of the Lord are under special protection; for they shine in Christ's right hand. II. THE PLACE OF REAL POWER. "Out of His mouth went a sharp

two-edged sword." Not out of the stars, but out of our Lord's mouth goes the strength which wins the day. 1. The true power of the Church lies in Christ personally. The power of a Church in the presence of her Lord. He has not deposited power in men; He retains it in Himself, and from Himself we must seek it. Behold the infinite resources of the Church; all power is in Jesus, and Jesus is with His people. 2. The power lies in Christ's word: "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." The power is not in the stars, but in the word which made the stars. 3. It is not only His word, but it is His word as He Himself speaks it. It is not the letter of the word which Jesus spake eighteen hundred years ago which works wonders; but it is that same word as He now delivers it into our ear and heart by His own living, loving, heart-subduing voice. 4. The word is in itself adapted to the Divine end, for it is sharp and two-edged; and when it is spoken by the Lord, its adaptation is seen. The gospel is very sharp when the Spirit of God lays it home. No doctrine of men has such piercing power. III. THE SOURCE OF TRUE GLORY. 1. To the saints the glory of Christ lies in Himself: His own countenance is the centre of glory. 2. The favour of Christ, if it be enjoyed by a Church, is effectual for all purposes. 3. The brightness of our Lord cannot be measured, neither could His glory be endured of mortal men if once it were fully revealed. "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." John therefore could not gaze upon that countenance, but fell at his Lord's feet as dead. And if the Lord Jesus were to manifest Himself to us as He really is, in all His unveiled majesty, we should die with excess of joy. 4. If Christ's face be so bright, then we know where to trace all the light and all the glory that we have ever seen or known. Is there any beauty in the landscape? It is the sun that makes it beautiful. Is there any brightness in any object round about us? It is the sun that makes it bright. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.—*Christ's countenance compared to the sun*:—1. Because of the glorious majesty that is in it (*Cant. v. 15*). There is an excellency and beauty in it that dazzles and obscures all the excellency and beauty of the world, even as the light of the sun obscures the stars. 2. Because of the lightsomeness of it; for Christ is to believers as the sun is to the world (*John i. 9*). 3. His countenance is as the sun shining in his strength, for the refreshingness of it (*Psa. iv. 6, 7*). His countenance maketh the heart more glad than corn and wine and worldly comforts whatsoever. 4. His countenance is so compared from the effectual influence it hath on believers' growth (*Mal. iv.*). (*James Durham.*)

Vers. 17-20. I fell at His feet as dead.—*Reverence*:—I. Every age has its moral as well as its social and political tastes; and REVERENCE IS NOT ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR VIRTUES OF THE PRESENT DAY. Many a man who would be anxious to be considered brave, or truthful, or even patient and benevolent, would not be altogether pleased to hear himself described as a reverent man. Reverence he imagines to be the temper of mind which readily crouches down to the falsehood which it dares not confront; which is easy-going, soft, feeble, passive. Reverence, he thinks, lives in the past, lives in the unreal, lives in sentiment; lives for the sake of existing institutions, good or bad. It is naturally fostered by their advocates, while it is the foe of active virtue in all its forms. This idea of reverence is entertained by many persons who are in no degree responsible for the shape it takes, and who are quite sincere in entertaining it. They do but take in and accept and act on judgments which are floating in the mental atmosphere which they breathe. But, of course, originally, this atmosphere has been made what it is by various contributors and experimentalists. And among these have been some who knew quite well that, if you want to get rid of a doctrine or a virtue, the best way is boldly to caricature it. You ask me, What is reverence? If we must attempt a definition, it is not easy to improve upon the saying that it is "the sincere, the practical recognition of greatness." And, when speaking thus, let us take greatness in its widest sense. The Highest Greatness, the Greatness from which all other greatness proceeds, is entitled to the deepest reverence. If the recognition of such greatness is to be not merely adequate but sincere, it will take unwonted forms, and make exacting demands upon us. Certainly, reverence is not the homage which weak minds pay to acceptable fictions. It would not be a virtue if it were. All virtue is based on truth. Reverence is the sense of truth put in practice. Nor is reverence the foe of energy. We can only imitate with a good conscience that which we revere; and reverence stimulates the energy of imitation. Accordingly, on this very account, reverence of a worthy object, the sincere recogni-

tion of real greatness is not an excellence which may be dropped or taken up at pleasure. It is a necessary virtue, whether for a man or for a society. The man without reverence is the man who can see in God's universe no greatness which transcends himself. The really pitiable thing is to revere nothing. Thoughtful Americans have said that, amid all the material greatness of their country—and it is sufficiently astonishing—their gravest anxiety for her future is caused by the absence of reverence among all classes of her people; the absence of any sincere recognition of a greatness which may ennoble its reverers. II. Reverence, then, is by no means only or chiefly an ecclesiastical virtue; it is necessary to the perfection of man as man, and to the well-being of society. But REVERENCE IS PECULIARLY A CREATION OF RELIGION. And if we ask why religion is thus the teacher and the Church the school of reverence, the answer is, Because religion unveils before the soul of man a Greatness compared with which all human greatness is insignificance itself. To the eye of religious faith, over every life, every character, every institution, every ideal, there is inscribed, "God alone is great." If the Christian's eye rests reverently upon an excellence, whether of saint, or office, or institution, beneath His throne, it is not as on something satisfying or final: it is as on an emanation from the Source of greatness. When reverence is in the immediate presence of God, it takes a new form, or it adopts a new expression. It offers that which it offers to none other or less than God. It offers adoration. The least that reverence can do in the presence of boundless Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, is to prostrate before Him every created faculty. For close contact with God produces on the soul of man, first of all, an impression of awe; and this impression is deep in exact proportion to the closeness of the contact. When reverence for God is rooted in the soul, the soul sees God in all that reflects and represents Him on earth, and yields it for His sake appropriate recognition. The father, representing His parental authority; the mother, reflecting His tender love; the powers that be in the State, ordained by God as His ministers; pastors of His Church, to whom He has said, "He that despiseth you despiseth Me"; great and good men, whether in past ages or our contemporaries; the Bible, which embodies for all time His revelation of Himself and His will concerning us; the laws of the natural world, when they are really ascertained, as being His modes of working; the sacraments, as channels of His grace, or veils of His presence; all that belongs to the public worship of Christ in His temples here on earth—these are objects of Christian reverence because they are inseparable from Him Who is the Only Great. Conclusion: 1. Reverence is a test, a measure of faith. We do not see God with our bodily eyes: faith is a second sight which does see Him. If men see God, they will behave accordingly. Apply this to behaviour in a church. But if He is with us, if His presence explains and justifies all that is said and sung, must it not follow that whatever expresses our feeling of lowly awe at the nearness of the Most Holy, before whom His angels veil their faces, is but the common sense of the occasion. No one could for long lounge back in an easy chair if moved by a sense of burning indignation; no one with tender affection in his heart could long maintain an expression of countenance which implied that he was entirely out of temper. He would be conscious that the contrast was ridiculous. In the same way, if a man sees God, he will behave as it is natural to behave in the presence of the Almighty. He will be too absorbed to look about at his fellow-worshippers; too much alive to the greatness and awfulness of God to care what others think about himself: he will yield to those instinctive expressions of reverence which the Creator has implanted in us by nature and refined and heightened by grace; and he will find that the reverence of the soul is best secured when the body, its companion and instrument, is reverent also. 2. Reverence begins from within. It cannot be learned as a code of outward conduct. To act and speak reverently, a man must feel reverently; and if he is to feel reverently, he must see our Lord. If he feels what it is to be in God's presence, to speak to Him, to ask Him to do this or that, to promise Him to attempt this or that; if he has any idea of the meaning of these solemn acts of the soul, the outward proprieties will follow. 3. Lastly, reverence, the deepest, the truest, is perfectly compatible with love. In sober earnest, reverence is the salt which preserves the purity of affection, without impairing its intensity. We are so framed that we can only love for long that which we heartily respect. The passion which is lavished for a few hours upon an object which does not deserve respect is unworthy of the sacred name of love. And God, when He asks the best love of our hearts, would preserve it from corruption by requiring also the safeguard of reverence. (Canon Liddon.) *The fear of God*:—It is not alone the first beginnings of religion

that are full of fear. So long as love is imperfect, there is room for torment. The thing that is unknown, yet known to be, will always be more or less formidable. When it is known as immeasurably greater than we, and as having claims and making demands upon us, the more vaguely these are apprehended, the more room is there for anxiety; and when the conscience is not clear, this anxiety may well mount to terror. In him who does not know God, and must be anything but satisfied with himself, fear towards God is as reasonable as it is natural, and serves powerfully towards the development of his true humanity. Until love, which is the truth towards God, is able to cast out fear, it is well that fear should hold; it is a bond, however poor, between that which is and that which creates—a bond that must be broken, but a bond that can be broken only by the tightening of an infinitely closer bond. God being what He is, a God who loves righteousness, a God who, that His creature might not die of ignorance, died as much as a God could die, and that is Divinely more than man can die, to give him Himself; such a God, I say, may well look fearful from afar to the creature who recognises in himself no imperative good, who fears only suffering, and has no aspiration, only wretched ambition! But in proportion as such a creature comes nearer, grows towards Him in and for whose likeness he was begun; in proportion, that is, as the eternal right begins to disclose itself to him; in proportion, I do not say as he sees these things, but as he nears the possibility of seeing them, will his terror at the God of his life abate; though far indeed from surmising the bliss that awaits him, he is drawing more nigh to the goal of his nature, the central secret joy of sonship to a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, does nothing He would not permit in His creature, demands nothing of His creature He would not do Himself. When John saw the glory of the Son of Man, he fell at His feet as one dead. In what way John saw Him, whether in what we vaguely call a vision, or in as human a way as when he leaned back on His bosom and looked up in His face, I do not now care to ask: it would take all glorious shapes of humanity to reveal Jesus, and He knew the right way to show Himself to John. Why, then, was John overcome with terror? No glory even of God should breed terror; when a child of God is afraid, it is a sign that the word "Father" is not yet freely fashioned by the child's spiritual mouth. The glory can breed terror only in him who is capable of being terrified by it; while he is such it is well the terror should be bred and maintained, until the man seek refuge from it in the only place where it is not—in the bosom of the glory. Why, then, was John afraid? Why did the servant of the Lord fall at His feet as one dead? Joy to us that he did, for the words that follow—surely no phantasmic outcome of uncertain vision or blinding terror! They bear best sign of their source: however given to his ears, they must be from the heart of our great Brother, the one Man, Christ Jesus, Divinely human! It was still and only the imperfection of the disciple, unfinished in faith, so unfinished in everything a man needs, that was the cause of his terror. Endless must be our terror, until we come heart to heart with the fire-core of the universe, the first and the last and the Living One! But oh, the joy to be told, by Power Himself, the first and the last, the Living One—told what we can indeed then see must be true, but which we are so slow to believe—that the cure for trembling is the presence of Power; that fear cannot stand before Strength; that the visible God is the destruction of death; that the one and only safety in the universe is the perfect nearness of the Living One! God is being; death is nowhere! What a thing to be taught by the very mouth of Him who knows! Had John been as close in spirit to the Son of Man as he had been in bodily presence, he would have indeed fallen at His feet, but not as one dead—as one too full of joy to stand before the life that was feeding his; he would have fallen, but not to lie there senseless with awe the most holy; he would have fallen to embrace and kiss the feet of Him who had now a second time, as with a resurrection from above, arisen before him, in yet heavenly plenitude of glory. (*G. MacDonald.*) *The soul's vision of Christ*:—I. THE TIMES WHEN THE SOUL GETS ITS BRIGHTEST VISION OF CHRIST. 1. In times of persecution and loneliness. 2. In the communion of the Lord's day. 3. Upon the threshold of important duty. II. SOMETIMES THESE VISIONS HAVE AN APPALLING EFFECT UPON THE SOUL. 1. There is in this terror of the soul an element of deep humility and reverence. 2. This terror of the soul is not overcome by the most intimate friendship with Christ. III. IN THESE VISIONS THE GOOD ARE CONSOLED AND STRENGTHENED BY THE MERCIFUL CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST. 1. There was the strengthening assurance of a kindly action, "And He laid His right hand upon me." 2. There was the encouraging utterance of a compassionate word, "Fear not." Lessons: 1. Soul-visions are Divinely given to the good. 2. Soul-visions are not always at first welcome to the

good. 3. That the compassion of Christ renders soul-visions the chief joy of the Christian life. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *The nature and design of the vision:—*

I. THE EFFECT PRODUCED UPON THE APOSTLE: "When I saw Him," he says, "I fell at His feet as dead." This is the natural effect of such a visitation upon the senses and sensibilities of the human frame. If an imaginary apparition has turned many cold and motionless with fear, no wonder that it should have been done by the reality. Our feeble natures cannot bear the lustre of heavenly things. How admirably our sight and all our sensations and powers are adapted to the precise distance of the world of our habitation from the sun! Upon the same principle, He who has adapted the light of nature to our senses has, by a still more elaborate process, and involving far higher dependencies, given us such discoveries of the methods of His grace as are fitted to our precise condition in this life, and will adapt them, with equal wisdom and grace, to our more exalted position hereafter. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE APOSTLE WAS REVIVED: "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not." It is evident from this circumstance that the vision was now close before him. The same hand which had been seen upon the seven lamps was now laid upon him. Here was a further evidence of the reality of the vision. How easily could that hand have crushed him! How well it knew the weight of a hand which distinguishes mercy from judgment! How familiar with the motions indicative of tenderness and aid! This friendly act is accompanied with the encouraging words, "Fear not!" It dispels at once all painful apprehensions from the mind of John, restores the vigour of his frame, and enables him calmly to survey the unearthly and irradiated image before him, and to receive instructions from His lips. Sudden changes, whether of a beneficial or of a disastrous kind, have their effect, first upon the old, and then upon the renovated part of our natures. The more, indeed, we are habituated to the contemplation and indulgence of spiritual motives, the more promptly will they come to our aid, and the nearer they will approach to the instinct of a new nature; but we can never expect to arrive at such a degree of refinement in the present state, in which the instinct of nature shall be surpassed by the promptitude of grace, for that would be to suppose their characteristic distinction to be destroyed. III. A MORE FAMILIAR ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS PERSON IS NOW GIVEN: "I am the first and the last," &c. IV. THE COMMISSION IS RENEWED: "Write the things," &c. (*G. Rogers.*)

*The prostrate apostle:—*I. THE PROSTRATION OF THE APOSTLE: "I fell at His feet as dead." 1. This was the prostration of guilt and unworthiness, arising from the presence of a sin-aborring God. If anything can humble a sinful creature, it is to stand in the presence of infinite purity, greatness, and majesty. 2. This was the prostration of weakness and mortality. 3. This was the prostration of terror and alarm. 4. This was the prostration of holy worship. 5. This was the prostration of satisfied delight. 6. Here we may see the overwhelming power of the majesty of God. 7. Here we may see the boundless love and compassion of Jesus. He deals with His people in infinite kindness. As their days are, their strength shall be. II. THE GRACIOUS ACT OF OUR BLESSED LORD: "He laid His right hand upon me." 1. This was a human hand; so it seemed to be. One like the similitude of the sons of men touched the prophet's lips, and one who was the Son of Man laid His right hand on John. 2. This was not an angel's hand, but the right hand of Jesus. Amidst the splendours of the vision, John might forget that the Son of Man was the actor on the scene. 3. This was the act of the Shepherd of Israel, who gathers the lambs with His arm, carries them in His bosom. 4. This was the act of our great High Priest, who is possessed of infinite tenderness, who is touched with the feeling of all our infirmities. 5. This touch was marvellous. The angel of the Lord did wondrously, and Manoaah and his wife looked on; everything here was astonishing and wonderful. 6. This touch was mysterious: He looks to the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke. 7. This touch was omnipotent: it was the saving strength of His right hand (Psa. lxxvii. 10-15). 8. There was majesty in the touch; it was the touch of that hand which He lifts up to heaven and says, I live for ever. 9. There was mercy in the touch. The eye that pities, and the arm that brings salvation, meet together here in marvellous conjunction. 10. There was comfort in the touch (Psa. xvi. 11). 11. There was Divine blessedness conveyed by the touch. 12. There was infinite love in this mysterious act. It was not a heavy blow, but a kind and gentle touch. III. THE COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT PRESENTED TO JOHN: "Saying unto me, Fear not." Fear not the wrath of God, for He is your Father. Fear not the law of God, for it has been magnified, honoured, and exalted. Fear not the curse of God, for it has been inflicted, exhausted, and removed. Fear not death, the dark king of terrors, for by My death he has been vanquished, and swallowed

up in victory. IV. THE GROUNDS OF HOLY COMFORT. 1. His essential Deity: "He is the first and the last, and the Living One." The essential Deity of the God of Israel is often assigned as a ground of comfort to the ancient Church (Gen. xv. 1; Isa. xli. 10, 14, xliii. 1, 2). The Deity of Christ affords the same ground of comfort to His people still. From His power, under the feeling of frailty and infirmity; from His eternity, under the fear of approaching dissolution (Psa. xc. 1, 2); from His covenant mercy, under the conviction of sin and unworthiness (Psa. ciii. 13-18); from His covenant faithfulness, under the fear that the Lord will cast us off. 2. His person: "I am He that liveth and was dead." 3. His office: "I am He that liveth and was dead." This office consisteth of three great parts—the office of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King. 4. His redeeming work. (*Jas. Young.*) *Sudden revelations*:—Philip said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." He committed the supreme mistake of mankind in supposing that man could endure the sudden and perfect revelation of God. Moses said, "Show me Thy glory," but the Lord answered, "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live." Isaiah caught a glimpse of the King, and exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone." Job said, "Now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When in the transfiguration the disciples saw Christ's face shine as the sun, and His raiment became white and glistening, "they fell on their face and were sore afraid." We think ourselves ready for any revelation, whereas the fact is that our capacity for receiving revelation is distinctly limited, and in this matter, as in every other, we are straitened in ourselves and not in God, and partial revelation is explained by the fact that God adapts the light to the vision which has to receive it. 1. This is open to illustration from the common events of human life. (1) Doctor's report of child's health. (2) A view of the next seven years' trials, &c. (3) We value a friend for his discretion in such matters. And yet you, who cannot bear these revelations, ask to be shown the Infinite God! A child who cannot bear the twinkle of a candle demands to look upon the noonday sun! 2. This is gracious on the part of God. Child: all the books he has to learn, at once! See how many different languages he has to learn without ever going beyond English! Every new department has a language of its own. If he could hear them all at once, he would enter Babel at a step! Observe: If we could see the last from the first, it would make us impatient of all that lay between. Mark the unhappy effect of such impatience: (1) Imperfect knowledge. (2) Restless temper. (3) Immature conclusions. A great part of the advantage is in the actual growing. We want breadth as well as height. The day dawns; the year develops; the harvest comes little by little. We are, then, in the line of the Divine movement in receiving revelation by degrees. This is the law. This is God's way. 3. Any unwillingness to submit to this method of revelation is proof of an unsound and presumptuous mind. It would be accounted so in the family, in business, in statesmanship. In all things it is well to serve an apprenticeship. Let us know that life is a continual revelation. We cannot see over the wall that separates to-morrow from to-day. But Christ says, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." We are revealed to ourselves little by little. Another hint, another gleam, and so let knowledge come to us even as the sun shineth more and more unto the perfect day. John could recline on Christ's breast, yet was dazzled and overpowered by the suddenly revealed glory of his Lord. There is a familiar side of Christ, and a side unfamiliar. Some mountains are accessible on one side only. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not.—*The glorious Master and the swooning disciple*:—I. THE DISCIPLE OVERPOWERED. 1. The occasion. 2. The reason. It was partly fear. That fear originated partly in a sense of his own weakness and insignificance in the presence of the Divine strength and greatness. How shall an insect live in the furnace of the sun? We are such infirmity, folly, and nothingness, that, if we have but a glimpse of omnipotence, awe and reverence prostrate us to the earth. The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God, are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord that they are humbled and filled with holy awe, and even with dread and alarm. The reverence which is commendable is pushed by the infirmity of our nature into a fear which is excessive. There is no doubt, too, that a part of the fear which caused John to swoon arose from a partial ignorance or forgetfulness of his Lord. Shall we charge this upon one who wrote one of the gospels and three choice epistles? Yes, it was doubtless so, because the Master went on to instruct and teach him in order to remove his fear. He needed fresh knowledge or old truths

brought home with renewed power in order to cure his dread. As soon as he knew his Lord he recovered his strength. Study, then, your Lord. Make it your life's object to know Him. 3. The extent. "As dead." It is an infinite blessing to us to be utterly emptied, spoiled, and slain before the Lord. Our strength is our weakness, our life is our death, and when both are entirely gone we begin to be strong, and in very deed to live. 4. The place. "At His feet." It matters not what aileth us if we lie at Jesus's feet. Better be dead there than live anywhere else. He is ever gentle and tender, never breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax. In proportion as He perceives that our weakness is manifest to us, in that degree will He display His tenderness. "He carrieth the lambs in His bosom." II. THE SAME DISCIPLE RESTORED. 1. By a condescending approach. "He laid His hand upon me." No other hand could have revived the apostle, but the hand which was pierced for him had matchless power. 2. The communication of Divine strength. "His right hand"—the hand of favour and of power. There must be actual strength and energy imparted to a swooning soul, and, glory be to God, by His own Holy Spirit, Jesus can and does communicate energy to His people in time of weakness. He is come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. The omnipotence of God is made to rest upon us, so that we even glory in infirmities. "My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness," is a blessed promise, which has been fulfilled to the letter to many of us. Our own strength has departed, and then the power of God has flowed in to fill up the vacuum. 3. A word from the Master's own mouth. Truly there are many voices and each has its significance, but the voice of Jesus has a heaven of bliss in its every accent. Let but my Beloved speak to me, and I will forego the angelic symphonies. Though He should only say, "Fear not," and not a word beyond, it were worth worlds to see Him open His mouth unto us. But you say, can we still hear Jesus speak of us? Aye, by His Spirit. III. THE SAME DISCIPLE STILL FURTHER INSTRUCTED. 1. As to the Lord's person—that He was most truly Divine. Art thou afraid of Him, thy Brother, thy Saviour, thy Friend? Then what dost thou fear? Anything of old? He is the first. Anything to come? He is the last. Anything in all the world? He is all in all, from the first to the last. What dost thou want? If thou hast Him thou hast all. 2. As to His self-existence. Creatures are not living in themselves: they borrow leave to be; to God alone it belongs to exist necessarily. He is the I AM, and such is Christ. Why, then, dost thou fear? If the existence of thy Lord, thy Saviour, were precarious and dependent upon some extraneous circumstances thou wouldst have cause for fear, for thou wouldst be in constant jeopardy. 3. As to His atoning death. 4. As to His endless life. 5. As to His mediatorial office. Conclusion: The glory and exaltation of Christ is—1. The saint's cordial. 2. The sinner's terror. 3. The penitent's hope. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Fear not*:—How full of consolation is this grand passage! It breathes a most majestic sympathy. I. The text is most consolatory in the prospect of death. Keys are symbols of authority and law, and these keys of death remind us that government and order prevail in the realm of mortality. The gate of the grave is not blown about by the winds of chance; it has keys, it is opened and shut by royal authority. The engineer who constructs a locomotive knows what distance it will cover before it is worn out, one engine being calculated to accomplish a greater mileage, another less. Using material of a certain weight and quality, the engineer knows with tolerable accuracy what wear and tear his machine will endure, and, barring accidents, how long it will run. Thus He by whose hand we are fashioned knows the possibilities of our individual constitution, how far the throbbing machinery will go ere the weary wheels stand still; our appointed days are written in our physiological powers, not in some mystical Book of Fate. From this point of view it is not difficult to understand how one organism will endure for a long journey, whilst another necessarily breaks down, having accomplished a few stages only. We said, "barring accidents," the locomotive will cover a given distance; but what of the accidents which may put an end to the career of the locomotive long before its possibilities are exhausted? and what of the thousand accidents which put a period to human life in its very prime and power? The answer is, Under the personal sovereign government of heaven no real accident is possible to virtue. The woodman knows how trees of different species require to be felled at various seasons; it is best that some are cut down with the fresh leaves of spring upon them, that the axe smites others whilst they are robed in summer's pomp, whilst a third order must fall when the sap dies down in autumn and the leaves are tinged with the colours of decay. The forester knows when to smite the

forest glories; and there is One who knows why some human lives cease in their sweet spring, why others perish in manhood's pride, and why, again, others are spared to patriarchal years. At the right time, at the right place, in the right way, shall we suffer the stroke of mortality. Death to some may be a blind fury cutting short life's thin thread; but the Christian knows that the capital power is in the hands of One whose name is Love, and before His fingers turn the key His eyes of flame see the necessity and dictate the moment. II. The text is most consolatory in the ARTICLE of death. We have here, not only teaching concerning the law of death, but also precious doctrine touching its Lord. Jesus Christ is the Lord of death. The law of death is the active will of Jesus Christ. It is the glory of Christianity that it consistently exhibits law, not as some metaphysical rule or impersonal force, but as the action of a personal, intelligent, loving Ruler. The law of creation is the will of a wise and gracious Creator, who rejoices in all that His hands have made; the law of evolution is the will of an Evolver, who with wise purpose and unfailing intelligence presses forward all things to some "far-off Divine event"; the law of dissolution is the will of a just and infallible Judge, who determines all crises. When Dr. James Hamilton was dying his brother spoke to him of "death's cold embrace." Said the dying saint, "There is no cold embrace, William; there is no cold embrace." If our dissolution were effected simply by some mysterious abstract law working in the dark, it were indeed a cold embrace; but it is no longer cold when it is the pressure of that breast on which John leaned. In the light of this text death becomes transfigured; the keys are in the pierced hand; the keys are golden, they open the door into heaven. Whilst we think of these things even now strange music steals upon our senses, the rough wilderness smiles with flowers, a light above the brightness of the sun touches pain and sickness and sepulchre into gold, and in the hour and article of death these foretastes shall be fulfilled beyond all imagination; we shall not taste death; we shall not see it. III. The text inspires deep consolation touching the ISSUES of death. "I am alive for evermore." "I have the keys of the invisible universe." 1. There is a limit to the power of death. It does not destroy the personality; the dead may live again, live in new power and splendour. 2. There is a limit to the range of death. "Alive unto the ages of the ages." In the face of those oriental systems which threatened men with endless deaths, transmigrations, and metamorphoses, systems which modern paganism seeks to revive, Christianity holds that the faithful pass through one eclipse only into personal, conscious, immortal life. The law of death is not the law of all worlds; there are spheres where it has no place, golden ages undimmed by its shadow. Christ alive for evermore declares that immortality is the prerogative of the highest being also. The monad is inaccessible to death by being too low; man in Christ shall be inaccessible to death by being too high. "Fear not." True, we can never be wholly reconciled to death. Darwin used to go into the London Zoological Gardens, and, standing by the glass case containing the cobra di capello, put his forehead against the glass while the cobra struck out at him. The glass was between them: Darwin's mind was perfectly convinced as to the inability of the snake to harm him, yet he would always dodge. Time after time he tried it, his will and reason keeping him there, his instinct making him shrink. The instinct was stronger than both will and reason. And it is much like this with the Christian's attitude toward death: he knows that its sting cannot harm him, but there is an instinct within him that causes him to shrink whenever he comes into contact with the ghastly thing, and this instinct will not be altogether denied whatever the Christian reason and will may say. But in this shrinking is no terror or despair. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Christ destroys the believer's fears:—*

I. WHO IT IS THAT PRESCRIBES THE REMEDY FOR YOUR FEARS. It is Jesus who lays His right hand upon you, saying unto you, "Fear not." It is not by arguments devised by men that you are called on to look up in hope and confidence. It is by an entreaty coming to yourself fresh from the mouth of Him before whom you tremble. And oh, when it is He Himself that bids you not fear, does not the very glory with which He is encircled bring encouragement to your heart? Do you not feel that you may safely lay aside your fears, when all the terrors of His Majesty are arrayed, not against you, but on your behalf? II. EXAMINE THE REMEDY IN ITS SEVERAL PARTS. Christ not only bids His people fear not, but He urges reasons why they should not. These reasons are contained in the several parts of the remedy. 1. "I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth," or, as it might be rendered, "I am the Living One." Several ideas are comprehended

under these expressions: Christ existing from everlasting to everlasting—Christ the author and end of all things—Christ their sum and substance. The epithets are, you perceive, expressive of His Godhead. The others which He assumes in the text have respect to His humanity. How beautifully they all unite to dispel the fears of His people! Some of these fears are to be chased away by His Godhead some by His humanity; to chase away all Christ speaks both as God and as man.

2. "I was dead." In how striking a contrast this part stands to the last! The glory of the Deity is now shaded by the darkness of a human grave. But what an amount of comfort this part is calculated to afford; for, if Christ was dead, why should you fear to approach the throne of grace on which He now sits? But, again. If Christ was dead, why should you, who are one with Him, fear the punishment of your sins? That punishment is all past already. And still farther. If Christ was dead, why should you fear to die? Perhaps you are among those who, through fear of death, are subject to bondage. Then Christ died to deliver you from this fear.

3. "Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen." This part is another strange contrast to the last, another brilliant evolution of the character of your exalted Lord. The darkness of a human grave is now dispelled by the light of immortality.

4. "And have the keys of hell and of death." At death there is a separation not only from friends and the world, but even from your very self. Christ has the keys of all these doors. He has the key of the door by which the body and soul of His people separate. You cannot die, therefore, till Christ with His own hand open the door; the last breath is the turning of the lock. What serenity this should shed around the death-bed of the believer, and how strong consolation it should impart to those who are left behind! Christ has also the keys of the doors by which the souls and bodies of believers pass to each other for an eternal union. If saints on earth "groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body"—if their souls, even when inhabiting their earthly tabernacle, "do groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven"—what must be the longings of these souls as the winter of death advances to its close, and the time of the redemption of their bodies draws nigh! (G. Philip.)

Infallible antidotes against unbelieving fears:—From this subject we may observe the following: that the death and resurrection of Christ, that eternal life to which He was raised, and His mediatory sovereignty are the great grounds of the saints' consolation and sufficient to dispel all their unbelieving fears.

I. To speak a little to each of the things in the text, to unfold them, so as THAT THE GROUND OF COMFORT IN THEM MAY APPEAR.

1. As to His death. On this I offer these few remarks: (1) His death supposeth—His incarnation and living as a man in the world (John i. 14). (2) His death was vicarious: He died in the room and stead of sinners. (3) His sufferings and death were most exquisite: "God spared not His own Son." (4) His sufferings and death were satisfactory, and that fully.

2. As to His resurrection and the life to which He was restored. Here consider—(1) That God raised up Christ. (2) Where He now lives. It is in heaven, which we had forfeited by sin, but where we still would fain be. (3) For what He lives. The apostle tells us that it is to make intercession for us, and He Himself says it is to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, where there are many mansions.

3. The eternity of this life. The man Christ lives for evermore. He will eternally represent His own sacrifice as the foundation of our eternal glory: and as for His kingdom, it is an everlasting kingdom that shall not be destroyed (Dan. vii. 14). Let us—

4. Attend to His mediatorial sovereignty. Hell and death are terrible to the believer, but Christ holds the keys of both. Now these things, the death, resurrection, life, and power of Jesus, may be considered three ways in order to improve them for consolation to the saints.

(1) As patterns and examples. (2) As pledges, assuring the saints of what they wish for. (3) As containing in them sufficient salves for all their sores.

II. To point out THE NATURE OF THAT CONSOLATION WHICH SAINTS MAY DERIVE FROM THESE. For this purpose let us take a view of the fountains of their fears and distrust.

1. There is the super-eminent glory and infinite majesty of the great God. This, when seen and considered by poor worm man, whose habitation is in the dust, is a great source of fear. Can ye not look straight forward to Divine majesty, then fetch a compass and look through the veil of the flesh of Christ? and so ye may see God and not die. "Often and willingly," said Luther, "would I thus look at God." 2. Sin is another fountain for fear: sinfulness considered with the nature of God. But fear not, O Christian; Christ was dead and is alive for evermore; therefore the guilt that exposes to hell-fire is done away. Do ye doubt the completeness of the satisfaction? Behold

Christ in heaven with the complete discharge in His hand. He is out of prison. He brought the keys with Him and is now on the throne. 3. The sinner sees pollution in himself and holiness in God. When they behold the spotless purity of God, and themselves as an unclean thing, they are ready to say, Oh, will God look on vile me? will these pure eyes cast a favourable glance on such a dunghill-worm? Fear not, Christ was dead and is alive. He is made of God unto you sanctification. 4. Desertions are a cause of fears. The deserted soul is an affrighted soul. Good news to you in your low state Christ died, and in His death He was forsaken of God; and yet He now enjoys the bosom of the Father and the light of His countenance. Who would not be content to follow Christ, even through the valley of the shadow of death? 5. Temptations are a source of fears. Sometimes Satan gets leave to dog saints at their heels. This fills them with fear: but to such I say, Fear not. Christ died and is alive evermore. He that thus lives evermore gave a deadly wound to the tempter. We have no more to do but to cry to our Lord, who, from His own temptations, well knows how to succour His tempted people. 6. Death is the cause of much fear. But fear not: He that was dead is alive; and when ye are carried off you shall be with Him who is infinitely better than all earthly relations. 7. Hell is a fountain of fears. But fear not: for Christ died; and if so, He suffered the torments thou shouldst have suffered in hell as to the essentials of them. God will not require two payments for one debt.

III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. The comfortless state of them that are out of Christ. 2. The duty of Christians to improve these things for their actual comfort. (1) The grieving of the Spirit cuts the throats of our comforts. (2) Good men sometimes build their comforts on outward blessings; hence when these are gone their comfort is gone. (3) On grace within them, not on grace without them; the comfort of some streams from their obedience principally, therefore it is soon dried up; whereas the death and life of Christ are liable to no change, as is our obedience. (4) Upon the coming in of words to their minds. Hence, when a promise comes in they are comforted; when a threatening, all is gone. I do believe that the Spirit comforts His people by the word, and that He makes words come in with an impression on the soul (John xiv. 26). But then these words lead the soul direct to Christ and to build our comfort on Him; but it is not of God to build it on the bare impression of a comfortable word. The coming in of a word should guide us to Christ; and though the impression, the guide go, yet we may keep our hold of Him. A word to other two sources of the saint's fears. 1. Weakness and spiritual inability for the duties of religion. The soul taking a view of the great work it has to do, what strong lusts are to be mortified, temptations resisted, duties performed; and then, considering how weak and unable it is for any of these things, it is even ready to sink. But fear not: Christ died, &c. (Heb. xii. 12). 2. The danger of an evil time is another source of fear (Psa. xlix. 5). An evil time is a time of many snares. The soul is afraid that he will never stand out, but one day will fall. Fear not: Christ died, and it was an evil time, a time of many snares, yet He came safe off. This He did as a public person, and so it is a pledge that ye shall also be carried through (Heb. iv. 14-16). (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

Christ's words of good cheer:—No wonder that John fell senseless at His feet. There is no sign that he was prostrated by any sudden and appalling sense of sin. It was simply the rush of a magnificence too intolerably splendid. In a very small measure we can understand it, by the effect of a sudden glare of lightning and roll of thunder at midnight, or of being afloat on a fiercely agitated sea. It is not the guiltiest that are most excited, even if they be most alarmed; innocent children are overcome, sensitive and gentle women are profoundly moved; delicate nerves have more to do with the effect than guilty consciences. What has happened is a powerful impression of the contrast between these tremendous scenes and our poor faculties, our slight resources to avert, endure, or overcome. But our most awful impression was as nothing compared with his, upon whose mortal vision blazed the immortal splendours of a manhood taken into God. Now what is the comfort for human self-abasement and dread in the presence of supreme power? 1. It is, first, the nearer approach in love of what was so terrible in grandeur. He laid His right hand upon me saying, "Fear not." So, then, the Highest and Most Awful can be gentle. He whose feet can trample like burning brass has a hand whose touch is soothing; and the great voice, which crashed like a trumpet through the Sabbath stillness, can be so modulated as to reassure the trembling heart. 2. That John may not fear, his Master proceeds to announce who and what He is. The first word needs to be strongly emphasised:

"I am the First and the Last," as if the voice had said, "It is I, and not another, who am thus exalted." Can we doubt that with this word the personality of Him who spoke came in full force upon the hearer's soul? Well for us, in danger and dread, if our past life has tender and vivid associations with Him with whom we have to do, if we have known Him as the Hearer of our prayer, the Helper of our weakness, the Cleanser of our hearts. "I, then, whom thou knowest, and lovest, and canst trust—I am the First and the Last, and the Living One, and I became dead." It is not only said that Jesus is first and last, He is the First and the Last. No assertion of Deity could be more explicit. But like all such Scripture statements, this is made in the practical form best suited to the hearers' need. To the heart that quails and faints amid new revelations of dazzling majesty and overwhelming force, it is announced that His Loved One is behind and beyond all change, and that all life and power flow out from Him, the Living One. It is added that He "became dead," to remind His creature of expiation for all sin, and of the immutable heart which once broke, rather than be pitiless. (*G. A. Chadwick, D.D.*) *Fear not*:—Till rid of fear we are not fit to hear. (*J. Trapp*)

I am the First and the Last.—*The Christ of history and eternity*:—This sublime Apocalypse is the climax of Revelation. It carries us forward from narrative to prophecy, from facts to truths, from present conditions to permanent issues. Without such a revelation the religion of Jesus Christ would have lacked its crowning assurance, and the dispensation of grace its adequate interpretation. What is going on in the invisible above is essential to the understanding of what is going on in the visible around. Only as we get glimpse of the issue can we appreciate the purpose and strength of grace. The vision of Christ in His glory alone completes and justifies the history of Christ in His humiliation. The way-book of our faith could not stop with the record of an ascending Christ. For deep and clear as may be our inward fellowship with Christ, we cannot always escape the tyranny of our eyes. We see too much and too little—too much because too little. With awful precision we see the ravages of sin, the desolating frenzy of passion, the hungry eagerness with which graves close over hopes unrealised and lives whose record is vanity. But with all our seeing we see too little. Sin and strife and death are assuredly here. But with our unaided vision we do not see the large arena on which God is working out His gracious purpose: we do not see how these vast and appalling forces are under the control of a triumphant Redeemer; we do not see where, or how, or to what degree the conquering grace of Christ cleaves its way to the very heart of the conflict and robs the enemy of his spoil. It requires an Apocalypse to show us the wide empire and masterhood of Christ. Only as we see ahead can we see properly around. And in the goodness of His grace God has given us the larger, clearer sight. He has torn aside the veil.

I. OUR TEXT IS CHRIST'S NEW INTRODUCTION OF HIMSELF TO THE CHURCH MILITANT. It is the revelation of Himself in His Lordship, clothed with the authority and resource of spiritual empire. In His hands are the keys of mastery. To His service bend all heaven's powers. But what I want just now to emphasise is, that right in the centre of this vision of glory the old familiar Christ of the gospels is made clearly discernible. Not only is He the Living One with the keys; He is the One who became dead; the One, therefore, who lived and moved within range of historic observation. This is a point of present and pressing importance. It indicates and guards us against two opposite tendencies which threaten the vitality of Christian faith. On one hand there is a too evident readiness to minimise the importance of our evangelic narratives; to pass lightly over the great historical facts on which our gospel is based, and even to acquiesce in an account of those events which rob them of all special, not to say trustworthy, significance. On the other hand, there is a not less evident and equally disastrous tendency in the opposite direction. Some men never seem to get beyond history. The Christ they know is the Child at Nazareth, the homeless Wanderer in Judæa, the sympathetic Teacher and Worker in town and village, the willing Sufferer on Calvary. All this is good. It is a gain for which we ought to be devoutly thankful to have recovered from superstition and conventionalism the simple grandeur of Christ's actual human life. But this revived interest in the Christ of history is accompanied with some peril to the adequate conception of our Lord and Saviour. The absorbing study of His example, His principles, His revelation of God, His interpretation of man, His work and sacrifice for the redemption of the race, may very effectually obscure the grandeur of His eternal supremacy, and rob us of the strength and comfort derivable from fellowship with the living Lord. Christ is not dead; He is

risen. His life to-day is more than the influence of an unquenchable memory and of a love which the world cannot let die. The Christ of history is the living Christ upon the throne. He who was on earth is in heaven. He who is in heaven has come down again and fills the earth. His real presence has entered into every epoch of history. His personality is the most potent contemporary presence in life to-day. Our text sets us in right relation alike to the historic and the risen Christ. It saves us from the indefiniteness of that dreamy faith which declines to seek foothold on the solid earth, which claims self-sufficiency of intuitive knowledge and spiritual certainty. And, on the other hand, it leads us on from that mere back-looking and wingless faith which never escapes from earth and time, which never realises and rejoices in the personal presence of the living Lord.

II. AN INTELLIGENT FAITH IN CHRIST MUST BEGIN WITH THE STUDY OF HIS EARTHLY LIFE. It must look to what He was in order to know what He is. It must understand His work below before it can appreciate the character of His reign above. It must master the facts as a means towards possessing the truths of God's dispensation of grace. The reasons for this are obvious. Our earliest knowledge of Christ must come to us as our knowledge of any other historical person comes, through the portraiture of competent witnesses and biographers. But not only for the outline of Christ's personality and purpose are we dependent upon New Testament history. We must betake ourselves to the same quarter for an explanation of Christ's living power, for an interpretation of the mission He lives to complete, for an understanding of how we are to come into relation with His grace. The evangelical records set forth no mere passing events, no mere transitory phase in the evolution of Divine unfolding, which may be left behind and forgotten as if superseded by clearer and loftier revelations. The Cross of Calvary fills every page of history and overflows into eternity, stretching back and on in perpetual enactment. The Apocalyptic Seer, standing on his high mountain, looked back and saw the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world; he turned his gaze towards the future, and saw the endless ages gathering around the Lamb that had been slain, singing the song of victory through sacrifice. And to the Cross we must go to find God, to know Christ, to learn penitence, to reap forgiveness, to discover life and liberty. Yea, it is by beginning at Jerusalem that faith discovers where and how to find the living Christ, in what way and with what joy to attain fellowship with the risen Lord. But there is yet another reason why faith has need to master and to appropriate the facts of historical revelation. The historic Christ who lived, spake, worked, died, and rose again in our midst, supplies the ultimate ground of verification on which faith rests for its spiritual beliefs and hopes. A religion which is to take adequate grip of man must satisfy the eye and the brain not less than the heart and the spirit. It must approve itself by facts as well as by reasons and sentiments. You tell me, for instance, that God is love. How do you know that? It is not a natural idea. It is, as men phrase it, too good to be true. So says my natural and hesitating heart. Do you refer me to your experience? Do you affirm that the faith has been kindled in you by direct operation of the Divine Spirit? But are there no possibilities of misinterpretation and mistake? Has God ever spoken or wrought in other ways to warrant your belief that He is now speaking and working in you? I cannot believe it until God proves it by an appeal to all the considerations and all the instincts and all the lines of evidence which can reach me down here in the darkness. And that is what God has done. He has come down and embodied His message in a life which appeals to all the faculties, and responds to all the demands, of my nature. The historic Christ proves the trustworthiness of my spiritual conviction, and from the contemplation of that gracious life I go forward to the confident enjoyment of the elevating and constraining truth. So, too, in reference to the resurrection of the dead, that great gospel of glad tidings to a world filled with the dead and the dying. It is only when I can see and say, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept," that I regain the balance of hope and faith. The intimations of immortality in me immediately radiate with fresh light. All the arguments grounded in nature, in reason, in justice, in spiritual experience, gather a clearer probative force. The accomplished fact of Christ's resurrection interprets and verifies the instincts and promptings of my spirit within me, and beholding the risen Christ I can ask with exultant confidence, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and can sing with grand assurance the apostolic song, "Thanks be unto God," &c. Here, then, must Christian knowledge and spiritual faith find their foundation—in a devout mastery of the life and work of

the incarnate Christ. III. BUT BEGINNINGS ARE ONLY BEGINNINGS, AND MUST NOT BE MISTAKEN FOR COMPLETIONS. To have mastered the alphabet and the grammar of a language is to have come into possession of the key to its wealth of literature and ideas, but not into possession of the literature and ideas themselves. It is possible to know much about Christ and nothing of Him. For Christ is not contained in any or all the facts and doctrines concerning Himself. They interpret and point the way to Him. But He, the living Lord, whom they interpret, who gives significance and animation to them, is a Person, not an idea, and sits upon the throne of life, to be found of all who seek Him, waiting to bestow the blessings which His incarnate life wrought and revealed. Our study, therefore, of the great history, and of the doctrines of grace, is barren and futile unless we are guided thereby to seek and find the personal, living Saviour; to take from His own hands the gift which Christian history and doctrine explain, and to find in Him the actual enjoyment of promises made and truths revealed. There are two senses in the New Testament in which men are said to know Christ. Nicodemus said, "Master, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, because . . ." Here we have an instance of close observation, of thoughtful appreciation, of faultless logic leading to an irresistible conclusion. "We know, because . . ." This was, for the moment, all he knew of Christ: an external understanding—logical, convincing, veracious, but ineffective. How different was Paul's declaration, "I know whom I have believed"! Not, mark you, "I know in whom I have believed"; still less, "I know in what I have believed." "I know," said he, "whom I have believed." The knowledge was personal, inward, constraining—a knowledge arising out of living fellowship with Christ, and which conferred upon him the power of a new and radiant heart. In this same sense Paul had once prayed that he might know Christ. At the time he uttered that prayer he knew all the facts of the great biography, and had expounded in his principal letters the profound significance of the Lord's death and resurrection. Not in that sense, nor in those relations, are we to interpret his prayer for more knowledge of Christ. It was for fuller, deeper, personal possession of the Christ who unfolds Himself within the sacredness of Christian experience, whose gracious personality fills heaven with ceaseless wonder and adoration, whose presence in the heart expands into fresh discoveries of significance and charm. (*C. A. Berry.*) *An apocalyptic vision of Christ*:—Sixty years ago that old man wandered, glad and radiant, round the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The Word of Christ took possession of him, and he, led by it, followed after it till that blessed moment when, in the upper chamber, he lay upon the Master's breast. All through the life that followed he looked back that he might look before; his eyes turned to what had been, that his hope might reach up unto what was to be; and lo! he found that the issue was greater than his utmost expectation. The old man found a meaning in Christ the young man never discerned. Age is greater than youth. The glory of youth is the promise that is in it; the glory of age is the performance it represents. See how youth now ripened into perfect fruition in age. In that ancient John there lay the apocalyptic visions; visions of the world, the wonders that were to be. Whether would you have God dealing with you in a way that became God, or in a way that became man? Whether would you have God dealing with you in a God-like fashion, by standards that suit the Divine, or entirely in the measure of your own merit, and according to your own poor deserts? Whether would you have Divine pity, Divine grace, Divine long-suffering determine the great law of the Divine action, or would you regulate that action by standards of man's making and man's following? "I am the First and the Last and the Living." He is the great energy that works from first to last. "Indeed," saith our modern wise man, "He the energy! Energy, what is it but force? what is force but the power of doing work? what is force but a form of matter? Matter we know, God we do not know, all things that men discover and interpret they interpret in the terms of matter and motion and force. Matter doth make and matter doth rule; it is the one providence we know." Well, you know, and how do you know? Matter you know, ay, but "you" and "know." Subtract "you" and where is the matter? Take away thought and where is force? Has matter any being save to thought, save for thought? Matter without thought is not handled, discerned, spoken of, described, it is real only as thought is real. But if there can, even to man, be no reality or knowledge of matter without thought, nor matter, as object, save to intellect, then below all, underneath all, lies thought which is spirit, lies energy which is intellect, lies the great directive will that is but the abstract name for concrete God. "I am the First and the Last and the Living," and there is no life but the life God is, and makes. "And I became dead." There

enters here another and entirely new order of ideas. The great first, last, Living One became dead. To die He had become flesh, to make visible His glory, to veil the glory that He had made visible. There is the great order of thought that speaks of redemption, redemption by Him who became incarnate, who died—died ! but “ I am alive for ever more ”—died to live, yet not as of old, *Logos*, Word in God ; but the great incarnate, the living human heart in the potent Divine breast. It is here now where the matter comes in mainly in need of discussion. Here is this great enthroned Christ alive for ever more. What is the function that He exercises ? He has the keys of hell and of death. Well, then, if He has the keys of hell and death, what does hell mean ? It does not mean the place of torment or penalty, but the invisible, the home of all the dead, the great unseen land. The heaven above, the hell beneath ; these it comprehends ; it denotes all the vast, boundless, invisible world. What we know is but a speck, the unseen constitutes the real universe. And this invisible, the great, vast, invisible world in which our minute and hardly-discernible visible world swims, is this Hades, this world unseen, yet most real. Then death, if hell has so great a meaning, death cannot have a shallower. What is death but crossing the ocean, leaving the land that is known and turning one’s face to the great unknown to be unknown no more ? Several hundred years ago some men and women gathered round a Southern harbour and they saw three small ships weigh anchor and spread sail and stand out to sea. They watched them as the hull disappeared, as the sail dipped, and as all faded from sight, but whether into the blue heaven above or whether still sailing on the sea below, who behind could tell ? Months after in distant Western islands, men sat and wondered whether they were missed at home. In Italian and Spanish homes, longing wives and wistful sisters asked : “ Where are they ? our husbands, our brothers, float they still on the blue sea ? faded they into the great blue heaven ? ” So our fathers, they that have been, have passed from sight and floated into the great blue heaven, but they are a mightier host than their sons. They think of the sons behind, we think of the fathers before ; and thought and faith and hope reach o’er that mighty ocean, and grasp the vision of the mighty dead still living because Christ lives. “ The keys of death and hell. ” Keys are symbolical, emblems that speak of judgment, the right to judge and the might to execute. As the throne, the sceptre, the crown speak of regal dignity and regal rights, so the keys speak of judicial function. A great Sovereign sits in judgment, and these keys, Jesus Christ, in His capacity as Mediator, holds. He hath the keys of all the visible and invisible—death and hell. Men die, but they die not by chance. Accidents concern men, they do not concern God. Sudden events surprise us, there is no suddenness and no surprise to Him. Death is in the hands of Christ. The dying in Christ’s hands die unto life. In olden days when our fathers roamed the woods that stood where now busy cities are, they hewed from out the fallen oak trunk the frail canoe, they launched it on the ocean, then they skirted along the shore looking fearfully out for the coming storm, seeking safety by hugging the rock that was their very death. Now a mighty steamship which is a floating palace is launched upon the sea, and hundreds of men and women live there, and there, through night and day, in storm and calm, across the ocean the stately ship doth speed. So man without Christ is man facing the great ocean of death, the vast unknown land, in a frail canoe that the waters will surely utterly destroy. Man in Christ is man safe, wrapped in glorious security, resting in perfect peace, making painful yet peaceful and glad voyage out of time into a great eternity. And He who has these keys exercises the great function they give. He judges men. He who saves is He who judges, and who so good a judge as the gracious Saviour ? (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *Through death to life :—I.* THE DESIGNATION WHICH OUR LORD ASSUMED. “ I am the first and the last. ” Say that these words speak of Jesus Christ as my Lord and my God, and yet as my Friend that sticketh closer than a brother ; say that they teach the human and the Divine nature in the one person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then I can understand how they would comfort the heart of the tremulous apostle. II. THE TRANSITION THROUGH WHICH OUR LORD PASSED. John would be no stranger to Him by and by. Was that eye, like a flame of fire, to tell of corruption ? Do those feet, burning as with fine brass, tell of corruption ? Does that voice, like the sound of many waters, tell of corruption ? Nay ; He had been dead, but now was alive again, and the promises He hath given were assured by His resurrection. No matter what there should be on the part of John in regard to Hades or to death, no matter what he might dread, let him renounce his dread, let him stand on his feet, let him look his Saviour in the face and recognise the old smile as well as

that voice, and lay down upon His breast as he was wont to do before our Lord was a sufferer on the Cross. Death had no more dominion over Him now. "He was alive for evermore." Come what might, there would be no other sacrifice for sin; no other sacrifice wanted. "I am alive for evermore"; and the liabilities of His humanity were exhausted; all the sacrificial responsibilities of His mediatorship were exhausted, there was not a fragment of those responsibilities left. It was finished. He had made an end of sin; He had abolished death, and swallowed it up in victory; He had become the resurrection and the life in perpetuity, throughout all the ages world without end. III. THE SOVEREIGNTY WHICH HE CLAIMED. All harmonised; all was coherent in the three several great departments of this text. Look at the supremacy of the sovereignty He assumed, and take care to use that connecting particle there, "and I have the keys of hell and of death." Now, the relations of Hades to you and to me are momentous in the extreme. But press questions as we may, to a very great extent they can obtain no satisfactory reply. I may, however, tell you one thing about Hades, and that is it is very effectually controlled. Supposing all the principalities and powers amidst the evil spirits of Hades were to come in all their force and in all their malignity against the Church of Christ which He had purchased with His own blood, what then? It was a fore-gone conclusion; and the principalities and powers in perdition would just ingloriously succumb. They might boast, as the poet says, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven," but they are in servitude after all their vaunting, and He whom they serve is no other than He whom they crucified. (*W. Brock, D.D.*)

A funeral sermon.—I. IT IS A GREAT THING TO DIE. The Son of God, the Redeemer of men, presides over death. He has the key of death. And is death a trifle, if He is magnified by presiding over it? A reasonable soul has changed states. A never dying soul has gone to bliss or woe. How important is life! And how careful a guard has God set over it! II. DEATH NEVER COMES AT RANDOM. The key is in the hand of the Saviour, and it is used with determination and judgment. He employs various means and instruments, but they are all under His control, and work His will. III. OUR LIFE ON EARTH IS UNDER THE CONSTANT NOTICE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. He takes constant notice of what we do, and of what we neglect. For as His turning the key at last is a judicial act, it supposes a close and accurate inspection, and proceeds upon it. Of Him who had the key it is said, also, that "His eyes were as a flame of fire." With these eyes he sees all that is done—they pierce through every disguise—the darkness and the light are both alike to them. If those who trust in Him are left to suffer, it is not from inadvertency, or indifference, or impotence, but from design for their profit. IV. HIS POWER IN DEATH CANNOT BE RESISTED. V. SOULS UPON WHOM THIS KEY IS TURNED, THOUGH SEPARATED FROM THIS WORLD, DO NOT CEASE TO BE. Their mode of existence and sphere of operation are changed, but the vital power remains. They see with these eyes no more, and no more hear with these ears; but still see and hear and understand. The key that opens the door for their departure from earth, opens the door of admission to another world. VI. THE INVISIBLE WORLD IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SAVIOUR. (*D. Merrill.*)

The Living One who became dead.—I. THE ROYAL CHRIST PROCLAIMS HIS ABSOLUTE LIFE. There is a much closer connection between the words of our text and those of the preceding verse than our Authorized Version gives. We must strike out that intrusive and wholly needless supplement "I am," and read the sentence unbrokenly. "I am the First and the Last and the Living One." Now that close connection of clauses in itself suggests that this expression "the Living One" means something more than the mere declaration that He was alive. It means, as I believe, exactly what Christ meant when, in the hearing of this same apostle, He said upon earth, "As the Father hath life in Himself so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." A life which, considered in contrast with all the life of creatures is underived, independent, and, considered in contrast with the life of the Father with whom that Son stands in ineffable and unbroken union, is bestowed. It is a paradox, I know, but until we have gone round the boundless boundaries of that Divine nature, we have no business to say that it is impossible. II. THE ROYAL CHRIST PROCLAIMS HIS SUBMISSION TO DEATH. Such a statement implies our Lord's assumption of flesh. The only possibility of death, for "the Living One," lies in His enwrapping Himself with that which can die. As you might put a piece of asbestos into a twist of cotton wool, over which the flame could have power, or as a sun might plunge into thick envelopes of darkness, so this eternal, absolute Life gathered to itself by voluntary accretion the surrounding which was capable of mortality. Let us bow before that mystery of Divine love,

the death of the Lord of Life. The motive which impelled Him, the consequences which followed, are not in view here. But there is another consideration that I may suggest. The eternal Life became dead. Then the awful solitude is solitary no longer. As travellers are cheered on a solitary road when they see the footprints that they know belonged to loved and trusted ones who have trodden it before, that desolate loneliness is less lonely when we think that He became dead. III. THE ROYAL CHRIST PROCLAIMS HIS ETERNAL LIFE IN GLORY. "Behold!"—as if calling attention to a wonder—"I am alive for evermore." Again I say we have here a distinctly Divine prerogative claimed by the exalted Christ. For that eternal life of which He speaks is by no means the communicated immortality which He imparts to them that in His love go down to death, but it is the inherent eternal life of the Divine nature. The "I" of my text is the Divine-human Jesus. The manhood is so intertwined with the Deity that the absolute life of the latter has, as it were, flowed over and glorified the former; and it is a Man who lays His hand upon the Divine prerogative, and says, "I live for evermore." And so, "because I live, ye shall live also." We cannot die as long as Christ is alive. Christ's resurrection is the pledge and the source of eternal life for us. IV. THE ROYAL CHRIST PROCLAIMS HIS AUTHORITY OVER THE DIM REGIONS OF THE DEAD. The original does not read "hell and death," but "death and" Hades, the dim unseen regions in which all the dead, whatsoever their condition may be, are gathered. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Jesus Christ and the nineteenth century*:—The thoughtful traveller in Europe, visiting the churches and cathedrals which are monuments at once to the munificence, religiousness, and superstition of past centuries, cannot fail to notice the many representations of a dead Christ which these buildings enshrine. There are those who insist that this dead Jesus is the symbol of the Christian faith. From that grave in the garden He did not come forth, and all the declarations of His disciples concerning His resurrection, His appearances to them were but dreams and fancies, or at most only mythical and poetic expressions of a continuity of His influence—an influence emanating from the moral beauty of His life and teaching upon the earth. It is against this denial of the actual resurrection of Jesus and the continuance of His personal life that I would speak. Jesus of Nazareth is not dead, but is alive for evermore. We are not unfamiliar with the substitute for this personal immortality, both of our Lord and of ourselves, which is proffered us to-day, namely, "a continuity of spiritual and mental energy and influence, passing from us unto others, and thus on through succeeding generations." The measure of truth in this we do not deny. It is true that all thought, all emotion, all aspiration of past generations enters into the present. It is true that in this sense Jesus Christ is alive, and lives for evermore. Beyond all others His influence is felt in the throbbing life of our own age. But was this posthumous influence all Christ meant in the predictions He made of His conquest over death and His rising again from the grave? He—not simply the memory of His words, not simply the influence His life has exerted upon His disciples—but *He* Himself will be with them to the end of the world. True, the visible form vanished from their eyes. That must be so. Limited fellowship must give way to universal communion. But did those followers of the Galilean ever, after that memorable scene on Olivet, doubt that their Master was with them? Never! John may be banished by pagan Rome from all the endearing associations of Christian brotherhood; yet no power could bereave him of the Saviour. Christ living in His followers is the secret of the continued life of the Christian Church. Empires have fallen, philosophies have been exploded. But this body of Christ, animated by His Spirit, has lived and grown, sustained by the life of Him who eighteen hundred years ago died and rose again. But I want to set before you the living Christ in relation to the larger life of our age, its theologies, its sociology, its literature, and its art. Jesus Christ is Himself the centre of all theology. The supreme evidence of Christianity is Christ. Never was there such activity in Christian thought as now. Never was the person or the character of Jesus more scrutinised than in this age. The marked feature of present theological discussion is that it centres around the Christ Himself rather than any of the doctrines or theories men have deduced from His words. Again: This living Christ is felt in the political movements of the present century. The nations of the earth are to-day moving in the direction of democracy. Many see and note this; but all do not perceive the character of the democracy which is thus developing. It is not the democracy of Greece or Rome in the days of their republics, but a new democracy which is coming up the steep of time. They were a republic of the few. This is a democracy of the whole. The new democracy will

know nothing in race, clime, creed, or colour to bar a man out of citizenship. The seeds of this democracy were sown when Christ proclaimed the brotherhood of man and sent forth His disciples to found a religion which aimed at the enfranchisement of all men. Legislation feels His influence. Law is more and more seeking to embody impartial, universal justice. Government seeks to hold its shield over all alike—the feeble, the poor, the unfortunate, as well as the rich, the strong, and the successful. The element of mercy was never so potent in the administration of law as to-day. The hand of Jesus has wiped hundreds of cruel and unjust penalties from the statute-books. The end now sought by punishment is not revenge, or restraint even, alone, but the reformation of the criminal. Some one has said culture and Christianity walk arm in arm. Jesus Christ said, “Go, teach.” To whom are we indebted for the greatest educational institutions of the present time? Men in whom Christ lived and who would have culture lay its crown at His feet. The children of the poor and toiling masses are gathered into schools, and the gates of knowledge flung open to them. The blind are made to see with the sensitive finger-tips, and the deaf seem almost to hear under the teaching of those who thus seek to do in the world the work of Him who is their Master and Lord. Note the influence of the Christ in the literature and art of this century. A few words must suffice. Never had literature so many men and women of commanding genius, whose work vibrates with the spirit of the Saviour. The essayists, poets, novelists, who have most deeply stirred the pulses of the present generation are those who in a greater or lesser degree write along the lines of religious thought, emotion, and human sympathy. Art is every year becoming purer. The most immortal work of the painter, ancient or modern, is that which seeks to bring before men something in the life and work of this Christ. Music rises to its highest development and takes its grandest forms of expression when it weds itself to sacred themes. The life of the world—social, moral, intellectual, artistic—the world’s nobler life is fed by the unfailing life of Jesus the Christ. Each passing year His presence will be more vividly recalled, His influence more potently felt. “Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” (*W. Lloyd, D.D.*) *Jesus living for ever*:—I. SOME EVIDENCES OF THE GLORIOUS TRUTH, THAT CHRIST IS HE WHO LIVES FOR EVERMORE. I cannot refer you to the light of nature for a proof of this point. Reason, indeed, teaches us that as God was the maker of all things, He must be from everlasting to everlasting, but with respect to Christ’s eternal continuance as man, or even with respect to His becoming man at first, it affords us no light. This is a mystery of godliness, made known by revelation only. 1. Scriptural representations of Christ show plainly that He liveth for evermore. When we would prove that man is a frail creature, we ask the question, What is flesh? And for an answer, we repeat Isaiah’s representation, “All flesh is grass,” &c. Now, compare these representations of men in general with the designations of the Man Christ Jesus, and you will see a striking contrast. What creature more durable than the sun? What is more immovable than a rock? And was not this the very metaphor which Christ used when speaking of Himself as God-man? 2. The types of Scripture import that He lives for evermore. I will mention only two, Moses’ burning bush, and Melchisedec. 3. The testimony of God, recorded in Scripture, shows that Jesus lives for ever. First, hear the testimony of the Father, “The Lord said unto my Lord,” &c. Hear next the testimony of the Son. “Thou wilt show Me the path of life,” &c. Hear also the testimony of the Holy Ghost. It was He who dwelt in the prophets, “testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” And what do these prophets, as directed by Him, say? One, speaking of Christ, expresses himself, “He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it Him, even length of days for ever and ever”; and another tells us, that “of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.” 4. Scripture doctrines evince the glorious truth that Christ lives for evermore. There is what is called the analogy of faith; now, the truth of which we speak is not only agreeable to this analogy but essential to it. For instance, according to Scripture, our Lord Jesus is the trustee of the new covenant. Yes, “He hath received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” If so, must He not live that He may distribute these gifts? Another doctrine of Scripture is, that Christ shall be the judge of the world. But how could Christ judge the world if it were not that He shall live to the end of days? And, then, how could He say, “come” to the righteous, and “depart” to the wicked, unless He were to live thereafter, even through a glorious eternity? II. THE IMPORT OF CHRIST’S LIVING FOR EVERMORE. 1. It denotes that Christ shall eternally exist. This is the lowest

sense of the words. What is death but a dissolution of the human frame? but Christ's humanity shall never cease to be. The body which was crucified He still retains, and shall do so for ever. 2. Christ shall be everlastingly happy. In the days of Christ's flesh, His afflictions were singular. If His trials were singular on earth, His pleasures in heaven are surpassing. 3. Jesus shall be eternally honoured. 4. Christ shall be everlastingly active. This seems to be the idea conveyed by the term *life*. Do you inquire wherein is Christ active? In reply, shall I direct your attention to His constant preservation of millions of beings, for "by Him all things consist?" I choose rather to point you to His deeds of grace. Behold Him in heaven—there "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." But His exertions are not confined to the abodes of bliss. It is Jesus "who executeth judgment for the oppressed," &c. But how long shall Jesus thus live and be active? In His humbled state, not above thirty-three years had elapsed, when He said of His work, "It is finished"; but rejoice, O Christians, His heavenly business shall never cease. "The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations."

III. IN WHAT DIFFERENT CHARACTERS CHRIST SHALL LIVE FOR EVER. 1. He shall live for ever as the glorious representative of God. 2. He shall live for ever as our gracious intercessor. 3. He shall live for ever as our spiritual King. IV. THE ENDS OF CHRIST'S LIVING FOR EVERMORE. 1. Hereby glory is brought to God. Ask you for a proof of God's justice in punishing? I point you to the Cross, and say, "Behold, the Surety of sinners died." But do you seek an evidence of retributive justice in rewarding? I direct your attention to the throne, and cry, "Behold, He lives for evermore." 2. Hereby a reward is given to Christ. He still remembers Gethsemane and Calvary, but He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. Oh, what must that satisfaction be, in the mind of the glorified Jesus! 3. Hereby believers are comforted. Does Christ live for evermore? Our justification must be permanent. Our sanctification is made certain. Does Jesus live for evermore? It secures support in the performance of every duty. Though we are feeble, He is strong; though we are depressed, it is He that raiseth up. 4. Hereby the inhabitants of heaven are transported. A gracious visit from Christ made a desert lightsome to Moses; the valley of the shadow of death comfortable to David; a fiery furnace easy to the three children. Oh, then, what will it be for ever with the Lord in heaven! (*E. Brown.*)

Christ's life in heaven:—I. HIS LIFE IN HEAVEN IS A LIFE THAT SUCCEEDS AN EXTRAORDINARY DEATH. 1. Absolute spotaneity. No being ever died but Christ who had the feeling that he need never die—that death could be for ever escaped. 2. Entire relativeness. He died for others. "He was bruised for our iniquities," &c. 3. Universal influence. II. HIS LIFE IN HEAVEN IS A LIFE OF ENDLESS DURATION. 1. His endless duration is a necessity of His nature. 2. His endless duration is the glory of the good. III. HIS LIFE IN HEAVEN IS A LIFE OF ABSOLUTE DOMINION OVER THE DESTINIES OF MEN. 1. There is nothing accidental in human history. 2. Departed men are still in existence. 3. Death is not the introduction to a new moral kingdom. The same Lord is here as there. 4. We may anticipate the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory. (*Homilist.*) *An Easter sermon*:—I have taken for my Easter text the account which Christ gives of Himself after His resurrection and ascension. See what Christ says of Himself then. First, "I am He that liveth." That word, "liveth," is a word of continuous, perpetual life. It describes the external existence which has no beginning and no end; which, considered in its purity and perfectness, has no present and no past, but one eternal and unbroken present—one eternal now. If anything has come to us to make us feel what a fragmentary thing our human life is, I think there is no greater knowledge for us to win than that the life of one who loves us as Christ loves us is an eternal life, with the continuance and the unchangeableness of eternity. See how we alter; how we make plans and finish them, or give them up; how we slip on from one stage of our career into another; how past, present, and future are for ever confusing our existence; how we die, and others come on in our places. How our heads ache and our hearts ache with it all sometimes. "Is this living?" we exclaim. "This is merely touching upon life. Is it living? Is it not like the touching of an insect on the surface of a river that is hundreds of miles long? His wing just brushes it at one point in its long course, and ruffles it for a second, and then is gone again, and that is all he has to do with it. And that is all we have to do with life. Is this living?" And then there comes this voice from Christ: "I am He that liveth," He declares—continuous, eternal life. See what a wonderful thing comes next. "I am He that liveth, and was dead." We do not begin to know how wonderful that is. Remember the eternally living, the very life of all

lives. And yet into that life of lives death has come—as an episode, an incident. That spiritual existence which had been going on for ever, on which the short existences of men had been strung into consistency, now came and submitted itself to that which men had always been submitting to. And lo! instead of being what men had feared it was, what men had hardly dared to hope that it was not, the putting out of life, it was seen to be only the changing of the circumstances of life, without any real power over the real principle of life; any more power than the cloud has over the sun that it obscures. That was the wonder of Christ's death. "It is an experience of life, not an end of life. Life goes on through it and comes out unharmed. Look at Me. I am He that liveth, and was dead!" But this is not all. Still the description goes on and unfolds itself. "He that liveth, and was dead," Christ says, "and behold I am alive for evermore." This existence after death is special, and different. It is not a mere reassertion of what had been already included in His great Word, "I am He that liveth." It is something added. It is an assurance that in the continued life which has once passed through the experience of death there is something new, another sympathy, the only one which before could have been lacking, with his brethren whose lot it is to die, and so a helpfulness to them which could not otherwise have been, even in His perfect love. And now think what that great self-description of the Saviour means, and what it is to us. "He that liveth!" And at once your fragment of life falls into its place in the eternity of life that is bridged by His being. "He that was dead!" And at once death changes from the terrible end of life into a most mysterious but no longer terrible experience of life. "He that is alive for evermore!" And not merely there is a future beyond the grave, but it is inhabited by One who speaks to us, who went there by the way that we must go, who sees us and can help us as we make our way along, and will receive us when we come there. Is not all changed? The devils of discontent, despair, selfishness, sensuality, how they are scattered before that voice, really heard, of the risen and everlasting Christ. But see how He goes on: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore. And I have the keys of hell and of death." It is because He died that He holds the keys of death. Can we not understand that? Do we not know how any soul that has passed through a great experience holds the keys of that experience, so that as he sees another coming up to it just as ignorantly and fearfully as he came, he can run up to this new-comer and open the door for him, show him on what side this experience is best entered, lead him through the dark passages of it where he could not easily find his way alone, and at last bring him out into the splendour of the light beyond? There are no nobler lives on earth than those of men and women who have passed through many experiences of many sorts, and who now go about with calm and happy and sober faces, holding their keys, some golden and some iron, and finding their joy in opening the gates of these experiences to younger souls, and sending them into them full of intelligence and hope and trust. Such lives, I think, we may all pray to grow into as we grow older, and pass through more and more of the experiences of life. And now this is just exactly what Jesus does for us by His resurrection. Having the keys of death and hell, He comes to us as we are drawing near to death, and He opens the door on both sides of it, and lets us look through it, and shows us immortality. Now you see we have passed over from Himself to us. Not merely He lives for ever, but so shall we; for us, too, death shall be not an end, but an experience; and beyond it for us, just as for Him, stretches immortality. Because He lives, we shall live also. And now shall we try to tell to one another what it is to be immortal, and to know it; what it is to have death broken down so that life stretches out beyond it, the same life as this, opening, expanding, but for ever the same essentially; just as to Him that always liveth the life that He liveth evermore is the same after the death on Calvary, though with some entrance of something—some new knowledge, and the sympathy of a new experience—that was not there before? First of all I think of the immense and noble freedom from many of the most trying and vexatious of our temptations which come to a man to whom the curtain has been lifted and the veil rent in twain. Sometimes when one is travelling through a foreign country it happens that he stops a day or two, a week or two, in some small village, where everything is local, which has little communication with the outside world; where the people are born and grow up, and grow old and die without thinking of leaving their little nest among the mountains. The traveller shares for a little while their local life, shuts himself in to their limitations. But all the while he is freer than they are; he is not tyrannised over by the small prescriptions and petty standards

that are despots to them. He knows of, and belongs to, a larger world. He is kept free by the sense of the world beyond the mountains, from which he came and to which he is going back again. And so when a man, strong in the conviction of immortality, really counts himself a stranger and a pilgrim among the multitudes who know no home, no world but this, then he is free among them; free from the worldly tyrannies that bind them; free from their temptations to be cowardly and mean. The wall of death, beyond which they never look, is to him only a mountain that can be crossed, from whose top he shall see eternity, where he belongs. This is the freedom of the best childhood and the best old age, these two ends of life in which the sense of immortality is most real and most true. And so, again, the whole position of duty is elevated by the thought, the knowledge of immortality. It seems to me that this day is a day for strong and cheerful resolutions, because it is a day when, with the spiritual world open before us, we can all catch sight of the destiny of duty—of how, some time or other, every good habit is to conquer and every good deed wear its crown. Duty is the one thing on earth that is so vital that it can go through death and come to glory. Duty is the one seed that has such life in it that it can lie as long as God will in the mummy hand of death, and yet be ready any moment to start into new growth in the new soil where He shall set it. So let us all consecrate our Easter Day by resolutely taking up some new duty which we know we ought to do. We bind ourselves so by a new chain to eternity, to the eternity of Him who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at God's right hand. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*)

A living Christ explains Christian history:—A Christ upon paper, though it were the sacred pages of the gospel, would have been as powerless to save Christendom as a Christ in fresco. A living Christ is the key to the phenomenon of Christian history. (*Canon Liddon.*)

The living Christ:—Christian faith is a mass of contradictions and a glorious tissue of harmony. It is easy to make it seem ridiculous to common sense. But it is fatal for religion to appeal to common sense. Our faith is faith in a Christ who is and who is not, in a dead man who is our living God, in one who was humiliated into eternal exaltation, who in extremest weakness realised and revealed the supreme power of heaven and earth. What is this faith in this Christ? It is faith—1. In a historic Christ. 2. In a living Christ. 3. In a Christ personal to each of us.

1. In a historic Christ. There was such a man. The story of Him is not an invention. Even if it were conceded that everything told of Him is not literally true, *He* was a reality. His figure is real and palpable in history. Moreover, this man is prolonged into posterity. He has had a vast influence in history. But no serious mind or conscience either denies or deplores that influence. To deplore Christ is to renounce the right to moral consideration. Even if He is not the Redeemer, He has been a vast blessing. He deserves more attention and gratitude than Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, Newton, or any of the heroes of culture and civilisation. He has done more for the race, for humanity as humanity. None of the most precious boons of civilisation would have been here to-day without Christianity, without Christ. He came in and raised a new civilisation out of the wreck of the old. Especially is this so with the achievements of love and their growth. Nobody has ever exerted such an influence, whether you like it or whether you do not. And it is an effect produced by one who went in the face of human nature. He gave effect, it is true, to certain vast, deep human tendencies, but so far as human prejudices and tastes go, He went in their teeth. What a personality! You cannot get more out than was in. If so much has been got out, how much must there have been in that miraculous soul! And how much remains. All this may be recognised by a dead faith, a poor but honest faith, a faith merely historic and intelligent, as a mere matter of observation. But this is hardly faith. It is not living faith. It is not the kind of response Christ died to evoke. On some who study Christ as a mere figure in history there dawns another kind of influence from Him. They begin as historians, as critics; they end as sympathisers, advocates, enthusiasts. They came to embalm Him with their spices, and they stay to worship and return to confess. They can no more be impartial, as if it were Napoleon, Socrates. The ordinary able man may merely discuss Him. But no human-hearted man, no man of soul, can really be impartial in dealing with Christ. Our sympathies are engaged, captured, preoccupied. The historic Christ stirs in humane minds a faith, a response, which makes mere criticism difficult or impossible. His beauty, terror, dignity, and invincibility tell. His love, mercy, faithfulness master us. His

indomitable grace survives death and rises in us. He becomes an imaginative ideal, and then a moral imperative. His principle of Divine Sonship becomes the base of a new religion. But this is a principle which is inseparable from His Person. But many separate the two, and are at a stage at which they answer to His principle more than to His Person. They think more of His present legacy than of His present life. Now these have no dead faith. Yet they have not a living faith. "They are between two worlds: one dead, the other powerless to be born." They are much more than critics and historians. But they are not yet the property of Christ, slaves like Paul, devotees like John. They believe in the Christ that lived and was dead. But they do not believe in the absolute Victor, Redeemer, and King, in the Christ that liveth for evermore, with the keys of hell and death. A living faith is not mere sympathy with a historic Christ. 2. When we speak of the difference between a dead faith and a living, what we really mean is a difference in the object of our faith more than the kind. The object determines the kind. Living faith is faith in a living Christ. It is only a living Christ that calls out a living faith. Do not fret yourself examining your faith, trying its limbs, feeling its pulse, watching its colour, measuring its work. See rather that it is set on a living Christ. Care for that Christ, and He will care for your faith. Realise a living Christ, and He will produce in you a living faith. He acts in many ways. He acts by His historic character, and He acts by His historic Church. But still more He acts by His Eternal Person and Holy Ghost. This living Lord is invisible, invincible, and immortal; and at the last irresistible; He acts not only on the large course of human events, but directly on living souls and wills, whether humble or refractory; and He rejoices alike in the love of His Father and the love of His redeemed, and in the communion of both. To realise this is more than faith in a historic Christ. Because living faith is faith in a living Christ. If He is not living, faith must dwindle and die. Do you think you can feed living faith on a dead Christ? What! could living faith go on in a God who could let such an one as Christ die, who could disappoint the confident faith of Christ Himself that God would raise Him up to glorious life? If He is not the living, reigning Christ, He is a Christ growing weaker as the ages move on, and He recedes into the past. If He be not a living Christ, then every generation makes His influence more indirect. More souls are interposed between our souls and Him, and absorb His limited light. The world moves on and forgets Him, moves on and leaves Him behind, moves on and outgrows Him. He becomes chiefly a scholar's Christ. Well, this is a frame of mind fatal at least to Christ's place as Redeemer. It may esteem Him as a Benefactor, but it displaces Him as Redeemer. It clears the ground for a totally new religion. It is not simply a redemption we need. If Christ had come to perform a certain work of redemption, and then had ceased to be, then we should have had in Him neither the redemption nor salvation that we need. We need a living Redeemer to take each one of us to God, to be for every one to-day all that He could have been upon earth to any one in that great yesterday, and to be for ever what He is to-day. We need Him as the human conscience of God to come to our rescue against our conscience. If we were left alone with our conscience it would do more, on the whole, to overwhelm us than to redeem us or support us. We need some surety more sure and merciful and universal than our conscience. We need something more worthy than our natural moral manhood. That is our need of a Redeemer, of a living, human Redeemer, a moral owner and King, a living Christ, a Lord and Master more immortal than ourselves, and the root of all that makes our immortality other than a burden. Yes, to lose the living Christ is to lose the living God. Whatever enfeebles the hold of Christ on the world relaxes its sense of God. It is faith in Christ that has kept belief in a God from dying out in the world. It is never the arguments of the thinkers or the intuitions of the saints that have done that. If Christ grow distant and dim, the sense of God fades from the soul and the power of God decays from life. And what happens then? We lose faith in man—in each other, and in ourselves. The soul that in its own strength defies God or dismisses Him from life, has taken the greatest step to losing faith in itself. How is that? It is thus. What I say is, lose the living God and you lose your own soul, your very self-confidence. And it is thus. Make your God not a living God, but a force, a blind, heartless power, or even an irresponsive idea, and you make Him something your heart and will can have no intercourse with. Mediator and Redeemer! must we not go farther even than that with an everlasting Christ? Yes, one step farther. Intercessor! Steward

and Key-bearer of the spiritual world! "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." It is an everlasting redemption, and therefore it is a ceaseless intercession. The intercession of Christ is simply the prolonged energy of His redeeming work. The soul of atonement is prayer. The standing relation of Christ to God is prayer. The perpetual energy of His spirit is prayer. It is the risen Redeemer that has the keys of the world unseen—the keys which admit it to history as well as open it to a man. The key of the unseen is prayer. That is the energy of the will which opens both the soul to the kingdom and the kingdom to his soul. But never our prayer. It is a prayer for us, not by us. It is Christ the Intercessor that has the key of the unseen—to deliver from death, to deliver into fulness of spiritual life. The Redeemer would be less than Eternal if He were not Intercessor. The living Christ could not live and not redeem, not intercede. Redemption would be a mere act in time if it were not prolonged as the native and congenial energy of the Redeemer's soul in the intercession of eternity. The priestly atonement of Christ was final, but it was final in the sense of working incessantly on, not only in its echoes and results with us, but in the self-sustained energies of His own Almighty and Immortal Spirit. This is the priesthood which is the end of priesthood, and its consummation the satisfaction of the priestly idea. 3. Faith in Christ is faith in Christ personal to us. We must have the historic Christ and more. We must have the living Christ. But a living Christ who only ruled His kingdom in the unseen by general laws would be no sufficient Saviour. He must be personal to us. He must be our Saviour, in our situation, our needs, loves, shames, sins. He must not only live, but mingle with our lives. He must charge Himself with our souls. We believe in the Holy Ghost. We have in Christ as the Spirit, the Sacrificer of our single lives, the Reader of our hearts, the Helper of our most private straits, the Inspirer of our most deep and sacred confessions. That is the Christ we need, and, thank God for His unspeakable gift, that is the Christ we have. (*P. T. Forsyth, D.D.*)

The living Lord:—I. HIS DIVINE NATURE. He is "the Living One." II. HIS MERCIFUL MISSION. He came to earth to die. III. HIS RELATION TO US NOW AS OUR LIVING LORD. 1. Our present Lord. He is with us always, even to the end of the world. He is "our very present help," compassing our path and our lying down; with us in the church and in the chamber, in the study and in the market, in the broad field of daily labour and in the sacred sphere of holy service. 2. Our observant Lord. Reading our every thought and feeling. 3. Our sympathetic Lord. Who can estimate the extent to which the burdens of this world have been lightened, its sorrows mitigated, its loneliness relieved, its apprehensions calmed, its whole life blessed by the felt presence of that sympathetic Lord who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"? 4. Our appreciative Lord. He values every offering, however small, that is made in purity of heart. 5. Our energising and recompensing Lord. We are not sufficient of ourselves to prevail against the strong spiritual forces opposed to us. 6. Our abiding Lord. (*W. Clarkson, B.A.*)

The Living One:—I. JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS TO BE THE PROPRIETOR OF LIFE. "I am He that liveth." The language is emphatic and suggestive. It is not "I live." Every animated existence in the universe might with truthfulness say, "I live." It is, however, one thing to possess life, but quite another thing to have it at our disposal. Amid the teeming myriads of existences which people the universe, there is not a creature in the heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the far-off districts of immensity, that can say, "I am He that liveth," or "I am the Living One." The title belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Lord and sole Proprietor of life. The plenitude of life is in Him, and from Him it emanates to all animate existences. This significant title suggests that Jesus Christ is the Proprietor of His own life as well as ours. It was His love for you and me that fastened Him to that awful cross. Had there been no love, the nails could not have detained Him. Even when entombed in the grave He was still the Proprietor of His life, and had perfect power over it. The grave had no power to detain His body a moment longer than He chose to submit to its detention. II. The life of which Christ claims to be the Proprietor is A LIFE SUBSEQUENT TO DEATH—a resurrection life: "Was dead." The death of Christ constitutes the foundation of our hope, the ground of our confidence, and the burden of the heavenly song. There could, however, be little or no joy in the hearts of the redeemed in heaven if Jesus Christ had not lived again after having died. To feel, while sharing the bliss of heaven, that the Lord Jesus was away, would shed a dash of bitterness into your cup, otherwise so full of joy, and dim the radiance of your immortality. What pleasure could there be in the feast if He

whose beneficence provided it were absent? What joy could there be in your Father's house if the Master of the house were away? If on Calvary the King's Son had been lost, if He had then fallen to rise no more, yet the victory of that day would have been turned into mourning, the loss to God's moral empire would have been greater than the gain—for it would have been greater to lose a Christ than to win a world. But, thanks be to God, costly as was our redemption, it was not at this cost; for He that was dead liveth again; and, behold, He is alive for evermore. III. The life of which Christ is the Proprietor is **ETERNAL**—it is to experience no interruption, no cessation: "I am alive for evermore." His glorified body is beyond the reach of corruption. Immortality flows through every vein, animates every limb, nerves every sinew. The announcement that Christ would live on for ever was peculiarly fitted to encourage the Church in her sorrow and persecution. Her position at this time was most painful and critical. A dark, portentous cloud brooded over her, and threatened to discharge a tempest of endless destruction upon her. But, in the midst of all her gloom and alarm, the Lord Jesus appears as her living and life-giving Head, and announces the cheering fact, "I am alive for evermore." Men, by hatred and opposition, may bring the Church low, but they can never destroy; they may scatter, but they can never annihilate. IV. **JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS SUPREMACY OVER DEATH AND HELL**—"I have the keys of hell and of death." 1. Jesus Christ is supreme over death. Look at that poor Christian pauper languishing on his pallet of straw in his unfurnished room. His death excites no interest, and is treated as unimportant and insignificant. But there stands One by his bed of death. It is no mortal, no creature whatsoever, it is not Michael or Gabriel; it is the Lord of Life, whose mandate must go forth ere the soul struggles loose from flesh. Disease cannot destroy him, the fever cannot consume him, and want cannot waste away the life, until Jesus gives the word of command for the spirit's departure. A man walking the scaffold trips his foot against a stone, the stone rolls over, and falls upon the casual passer-by, and the result is fatal. The case is brought before a coroner's jury, and as no malice, no intention, can be proved against the man who tripped against the stone, the verdict is given, "Accidental death." In the vocabulary of heaven no such word is found. Men do not die at random. Whether a man dies with the suddenness of a thunder-bolt or by lingering consumption, by the hand of the assassin or by an agonising disease, it is by no means fortuitous, for it takes place by the permission and under the immediate presidency of the Lord Jesus. 2. The Living One asserts that He has the key of hell, of Hades, the invisible world. This term applies to heaven, hell, and the grave. (1) Jesus Christ has the key of heaven. At the close of this earthly life every human being will undergo the severest scrutiny. It will be for Jesus to decide whether that spirit is fitted for the world of light and blessedness, or whether justice requires it to be doomed to regions of woe and despair for ever. (2) The expression "Hades" applies with equal force to hell literally. Jesus Christ has "the key of hell." What a solemn view does this give of the death of the wicked! They have rejected Christ, banished Him from their thoughts; but it is His hand, the hand that was pierced for them, that held out to them the overtures of pardon and peace, that opens for them the outer gate of death and the inner gate of hell. A few years since, a French scientist discovered that the retina of the eye retains for twenty-four hours after death a faithful image of the last object on which that eye fell during lifetime. He suggested that murderers might be detected by this process. Suppose a man murdered on the high road, if the victim's eye were fastened on the murderer the last lingering moment of his existence, there would be found on the retina a correct image of the murderer. I do not know what amount of truth there may be in this theory, or what practical results may spring from it; but this I believe, that the last object on which the sinner's eye shall fall before he enters the world of retribution will not be the form of weeping friends, or mourning wife, or sorrowing children; it will be something more awful, it will be the form of a rejected and therefore a grieved Saviour. (3) The term "Hades" may signify the grave. Infidelity impiously assigns the key of the grave to Annihilation, who is represented like a goddess presiding over the empire of the dead, and announcing that the opening of the graves of this lower world and the quickening into life of the dust of humanity is a thing incredible and impossible. But Jesus Christ holds the key. If I am doomed to be the prisoner of the grave, this I know, that both the prison and the prisoner will be in the custody of the Lord of Life. He will watch my dust. Not an atom shall perish. He will know where to find it all, and how to quicken it all. (R. Roberts.) *The life of Christ*

in heaven :—I. The whole strength of this comforting assurance to John lay in the **IDENTITY BETWEEN JESUS THAT HE HAD KNOWN, AND THE CHRIST THAT HE BEHELD.** “I am alive for evermore.” “I am He that liveth and was dead.” It is an appeal to the memory of John, therefore the consolation to us lies in this, that it is the very same Jesus—however glorified and altered externally—that liveth and was dead. It is the transference of the humanity of Christ to heaven—it is the eternity of the Incarnation—that is to be our comfort, and the great truth upon which we are to lean. What is the practical truth the Christian draws from this fact? The Apostle to the Hebrews commences with a description of Christ in His glory. In the first chapter, at the third verse, he says, “Who being the brightness of His (God’s) glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Here the Son of God is revealed to us as John saw Him—enthroned in His glory. But after the apostle had so described the enthroned Son of God, he requests us, in the third chapter, because he had so described Him, to consider Him—that is, Christ Jesus—“the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” The Son of God is still in heaven as the Son of Man, acting as our High Priest. In the seventh chapter the apostle proceeds to draw a further inference from this fact. He tells us that He is an eternal Priest—“a priest for ever after the order of the Melchisedec.” Christ Jesus is, then, eternally in the heavens a Priest for us. II. What **PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS** the apostle draws from it. 1. In the first place, he draws the conclusion that we have a certain and a better covenant. 2. In the next place, we read another practical inference, that Christ Jesus, as our High Priest, ever liveth to make intercession for us. 3. But Christ our High Priest not only pleads for the pardon and forgiveness of our sins; He, as our High Priest, also sanctifies us. For the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ is the “cleansing of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” It is the dedication of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit—to the service of his Maker, making him fit to appear in His temple. (*Abp. Magee.*) *Christ a living Saviour* :—What good would it do to you if your child were suffering torture from some peculiar accident to a limb, and I came and told you of a surgeon who lived a hundred years ago, and who had been wonderfully clever in re-setting the same bone after that precise kind of fracture? I might explain to you how it was he acquired his skill; I might give you fifty cases in which he was successful; you might be astonished at the proofs of his dexterity; you might feel that he would have been able and willing to relieve your child from pain, and to prevent all subsequent deformity. But if I came and told you of some living man who had shown the same skill; if I explained how it was that he had acquired his special experience; if I told you of one case after another in which he had succeeded when every other surgeon was helpless, you would say, “Now I have heard all this, I will send for him at once, and put my child in his hands.” And this is just what men have to be persuaded to do in relation to Christ . . . to realise that He is living still, and that He is not only willing, but able, to give every man who asks of Him forgiveness of all past evil, and strength to do better in time to come. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*) **And have the keys of hell and of death.**—*Christ wielding the keys of death, and of the world unseen* :—It is hard to disenchant our minds of the spell which is laid upon them by words—hard to divest ourselves of the associations which words call up. That solemn and awful word “hell,” which occurs in my text, how inevitably does its very sound bring up into the thoughts the idea of everlasting torments. And yet, as is well known, by the “hell” of the Apostles’ Creed, into which our Lord is said to have descended, is *not* meant the place of torments, but the place of departed spirits—the very sense attaching to the word in the passage now under examination. “The unseen realm” is, upon the whole, a just representation of its meaning in our language. All that is invisible—all that we cannot see, or the senses (represented by the eye, as the chief or ruling sense) cannot reach—it is a wonderfully comprehensive term. Think how much wider, how infinitely wider, is the range of the unseen than of the seen. This little ball of earth is a very insignificant district of God’s domain. Midnight reveals to us, twinkling through all the realms of space, thousands of other suns, each perhaps the centre of its own planetary system, having worlds revolving round them, which from their immense distances coupled with their opaqueness, are to us unseen. Think how many substances, there are, so minute, or of so subtle an organisation, that we cannot see them—substances like the air, or like the life-blood of the tiniest insect which floats as gossamer upon the bosom of the air, and drinks in through imperceptible vessels

the genial warmth of the golden summer day. But in addition to the most subtle organisations of matter, there are in the world spiritual essences. God is a spirit. We are taught to conceive of the holy angels as pure spirits, although we are quite unable to say for certain, that there may not be, attaching to the nature of angels, a certain very subtle organisation of matter. But, speculation apart, of this we are quite sure, that there are multitudes of angels. But this Hades has human, no less than heavenly, inhabitants. Think of the countless souls which, from the first formation of man upon the earth, have forsaken the tenement of the human body, and flitted forth into the receptacle appointed for their safe keeping, until the day of the resurrection. Endowed, all of them, with an immortal being—where do their spirits, their proper selves, now reside? We do not know, nor can we know. All we know is that we see them not; of their existence our senses take no cognisance; for us they are as if they were not; they are inhabitants of the Hades, the great unseen realm, which the veil of gross matter shrouds from our view. Aye, as I said, a great realm—exceeding vast—and, in some of its districts, exceeding glorious. The unseen bears to the seen world the same relation which the vast universe bears to a house or mansion. Every house, however sumptuous, is more or less dark, more or less confined, limits more or less the view of the surrounding country, defiles more or less, through its enclosures, the purity of the atmosphere. But go abroad from the midnight festival, where lamps shed an artificial glare, and the house reeks with the odours of the banquet—go abroad into the still, solemn starlight, and catch the fresh breeze on thy brow, and look upwards into the vast expanse, lit up with the lamps of heaven. Or go forth from the close and darkened chamber of sleep, into the light and stir of the fair summer morning, when the woods and streams are vocal with melody, and every little insect is on the wing, and all nature teems with life and animation. Such is the passage from the sphere which is seen with the eye of flesh, to that which is not seen; from the false artificial lights of time, to the solemn stillness of eternity; from the noxious vapours of the world, to the pure breath of heaven's atmosphere; from scenes where man's art and man's handicraft have on all sides set up their memorials, to scenes which man has never trodden. The division of God's universe, which has been thus suggested, into a seen and an unseen sphere—a sphere which is, and a sphere which is not, under the cognisance of sense—is probably as satisfactory, and certainly as simple, as any which could be devised. But there is another word in our text which, although common in every mouth, will yet be illustrated by a definition. That word is death. Hades is the world unseen, which has its door or portal, by which men enter into it. Death is the departure from the seen world, which seen world has its door of exit, by which men pass out of it. Hence death is called, in two or three passages of Scripture, exodus, or going out. There are many doors or avenues by which men pass out of this life, none of which can be opened except by the key which the risen Son of God holds in His hand. There is the door of disease, sometimes sharp and rapid, sometimes chronic and gradual. And the forms of disease, how various are they. There is the lingering decline, which keeps the patient waiting upon the threshold of the door, and mocks him, on bright days, with the hope (how soon to be blighted) of ultimate recovery. There is the burning fever, which hurries him, all hot, from the earth in a fit of frenzy or delirium. There is apoplexy, with its stroke of insensibility shattering the consciousness—paralysis, which ties up the utterances of the fluent tongue—nay, defects incidental to each vital organ, the due development of which may at any time issue in a departure from the world which is seen. There is the door of violence—the assassin's dagger and the foeman's lance. There is the door of animal decay, when the vital system is worn out, and the heart, wearied as it were with long toil, at first languidly discharges its functions, and then ceases altogether to beat. The only remaining word of the text which requires exposition is that of "keys"—"I have the keys of hell and death." The simple notion of a key is that which gives the power of opening a closed, or closing up an opened, door. But something more than a mere power of opening and shutting is, I believe, expressed by this imagery. General administrative power over a kingdom, or over a household (which is a kingdom in miniature), is expressed by the bearing of the key. Nothing more is necessary here, but that I should just advert to the plural form of the word "keys," which, of course, has reference to the two things specified—hell and death. The key of death is the key which unlocks the passage out of this world. The key of hell is that which unlocks the passage into the unseen and unknown. It is, I think, just worth observing that the notions are kept

distinct by the phraseology employed—the notion, I mean, of a passage out of the seen, and an entrance into the unseen world—as if it did not follow that because the spirit has passed out by the door of death it has therefore received its admission into the unseen realm. This remark may throw some light upon the case of those who, after life had seemed to be extinct, have undergone resuscitation, and who can record nothing after the mortal agony beyond their having fallen into a deep swoon, a swoon in which they were perfectly unconscious. It is perhaps possible (at least the phraseology of this passage would incline us to think so) to have the door of death opened to us and closed upon us, and yet (so far as the experience of the soul is concerned) not to have the door of the unseen world opened. And now to pass from the consideration of the words employed in this sublime passage, to that of the statement made in it. The risen Saviour is the speaker—One who, by becoming partaker of flesh and blood for our sakes, subjected Himself to the experience of a cruel and bitter death, and yet One who is now triumphant over death in all the incorruptibility of a glorified body. From which we learn, first, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His character of God-man—not in that of God—wields at present the administration of the entire universe, comprising both the little puny span of which man's senses and understanding can take cognisance, and also that vast and glorious domain which lies beyond the ken of flesh and blood—and of which it is our wisdom to confess, that we have neither seen it nor known it. We talk freely of God's administration in the realms of Nature and Providence, forgetting that it is the mediatorial kingdom, not the kingdom of mere Deity, under which we live at present. All power is committed unto Jesus in heaven and in earth. Upon His shoulder are laid the keys of all the vast Household, embracing thrones, and principalities, and powers among the heavenly hierarchy—men, with their unruly wills and fluctuating fortunes—together with the inferior creation, animate and inanimate, organised and inorganic, down to the meanest insect, and the plainest stone, and the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. Let the feeble and desponding Christian but duly weigh the truth that One who sympathises from personal experience with all his trials—One who was cradled in the manger, and inured to poverty from His youth—One who knew all the bitterness of persecution, and ridicule and abandonment of friends, and drained at last the dregs of the cup of death—is Vicegerent of the universe, and comfort shall soon dawn in the benighted heart, and light up in it the rainbow of a heavenly hope. But this general administration of Christ over the universe of God includes a particular dispensation towards every human individual, whereby He gives to each one of us, at the time of His appointment, our dismissal from the world which is seen, and our passport of entrance into that which is invisible. It is He who calls for the slow or rapid disease—He whose hand contrives the unforeseen disaster, so often attributed to chance—He who withdraws gradually the vital energy from some essential organ, so that, while the mechanism is complete, the function can no longer be discharged—and who thus opens to each separate individual the door of exodus out of this life. When the spirit has passed through this door, it waits awhile in the dark corridor which separates the seen from the unseen. Then, when life's last spark has really fled beyond the possibility of recall—then, then comes that Great Janitor, and sweeps past it down the dusky avenue, and takes the second key, and throws open to it a world of new experiences, and causes it to be thronged with new images from every district of the realm unseen. Thenceforth the spirit enters into Hades, there either to walk in Paradise and lie in Abraham's bosom, or to be tormented with a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall be consummated upon it at the sound of the resurrection trump. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

*Christ the King of death and Hades:—*I. “I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST.” In these words Christ claims one of the incommunicable attributes of Deity—existence which had no beginning and can know no end. He is the first. Are there not before the throne of God beings who beheld the first star gleam out in the ethereal vault—beings who existed before all worlds, and who relate to younger spirits the wonderful history of God's creation? But this foremost of created things trembles before the face of Jesus Christ. His eyes gaze out upon the celestial host—rank behind rank—thrones, dominations, virtues, powers—He surveys all the solemn troops and sweet societies, glowing with eternal love, flaming with immortal beauty, excelling in strength, glorious in holiness, and having surveyed them, He cries, “I am the first.” They shine, but with a glory borrowed from Him; they live, but with an immortality derived from the eternal throbbing of His infinite heart. “I am the first, and I am the last.” He lives through two eternities—the eternity past,

the eternity future—eternities which, like two infinite oceans, are joined together by the narrow strait of time. In the first eternity “He dwelt in the bosom of the Father,” and made the world by the word of His power. In time He took upon Himself our nature, was formed in fashion as a man, and “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” And when time shall be no more, through the eternal future, He shall be the centre of heaven’s glory, the object of its ceaseless worship, the fountain of its ineffable happiness. “I am the first and the last.” When heaven and earth have passed away He shall still abide. II. “I AM HE THAT LIVETH, AND WAS DEAD; AND BEHOLD I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE.” We do not worship a dead Saviour. In Him is life; with Him is the fountain of life. “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him.” With joy He announces, “I am He that was dead.” He remembers with satisfaction, with exultation, the shame and the pain, the conflict and the agony, by which He accomplished our redemption. He looks back, and with joy, upon the scenes of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary. Never will He forget that day when the quivering flesh and fainting heart staggered beneath the awful burden of human sin and Divine wrath. The Cross and the sepulchre were His way to the throne. III. “AND HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH.” The key was part of the regalia in eastern courts. Like the sceptre, diadem, and orb, it was a symbol of power, one of the insignia of high office. Our Lord here claims supreme control, unlimited authority over death and the invisible world. Christ has the keys of death. The grave is part of Emanuel’s empire. The king of terrors is the vassal of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doors of death cannot open to receive us until Christ has turned the key. We are a fallen race. Sin, being finished, hath brought forth death. Death hath dominion over us. But there is a consolation for us here—a voice like the sound of many waters cries: “I have the key of death.” We do not die by chance or haphazard; the time and circumstance of our death are appointed by Christ our Saviour; everything connected with our departure from this world is under His control. Those doors will not be unlocked till you are ready to pass through them. At the right moment He will turn the key of death, and you will have gone through the most terrible crisis of your history as an immortal being. Through the whole of the time of His waiting He is busy preparing you for that crisis. This life is for you a season of discipline, of education, of culture. Not till the preparation process is completed will you be transplanted from the thorny wilderness to bloom in the paradise of God. But while the true Christian may rejoice in this thought, the heart of the sinner may well meditate with terror. When your measure of iniquity is completed; when by persistent sin and frivolity you have made yourself a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, then the key will be turned, the doors of death will shut upon you, and in that sad hour shall all your joys perish. The door is shut; the key is turned; you have chosen your lot, and it must be yours for ever. Christ has the keys of death—of the grave. Our dust is in His charge. Over the tomb of every saint He writes, “I will raise him up at the last day.” He is the Redeemer of the body. He has set His seal upon it; it is His. Our dust is precious in His sight. His eye follows it through all its changes, and keeps it safely. Our mortal frames contain the germ of an immortal body, and out of the dust of death His power shall raise us up beautiful in His own likeness. As the rough bulb buried underground springs up into green leaf and gorgeous bloom—as the grain, perishing in darkness, unfolds into tender blade and ripened ear; so this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption when the last trumpet blows. He who has the keys shall loose the bands of death. He turns us now to destruction, but will at last say, “Return, ye children of men.” Christ has also the keys of Hades—that is, He is Lord of the invisible world of the dead. Death does not free us from His sceptre, but only brings us more sensibly under His authority. This mouldering frame (exquisitely made though it be) is but the least part of us; in the tombs of the saints we have only the “shells of fledged souls left behind”—the cumbersome garment of the spirit which it has thrown aside, in order to flee away to its rest in the arms of God. The notion that the soul passes the interval between death and the resurrection in a dreamless sleep, has been stoutly defended by many theologians. The most cursory examination will suffice to show that this doctrine has no foundation in the Word of God. It is there plainly taught that disembodied spirits are in a state of conscious enjoyment or misery directly after their exodus from this world. Over the world of disembodied spirits—where the souls of the good have their perfect consummation and bliss; while the souls of the

wicked are reserved in a prison of horror and chains of darkness, until at the last day they shall receive their unavoidable sentence—over this world Christ is King. From His golden girdle hang the keys of both the upper and lower Hades. When He turns the key to let us out of this world, He turns that other key which admits us to our own place in the world beyond the grave. His saints who die in humble and joyful faith, relying on His death, and resting on His promises, are borne by the angels to the gates of the upper Paradise. He who has the key graciously admits them, and bids them welcome from the toils and sorrows of earth to those scenes of quiet rest and calm enjoyment. Christ's enemies, who die rejecting His mercies and blaspheming His name, shall find His dreadful face frowning upon them as they enter the other world. That hand which was so long stretched out to them in mercy shall thrust them into the dolorous prison-house; and, turning the key upon them, He will leave them to anticipate the overwhelming shame and anguish of that dread day. In His Book of Life He inserts the names of His friends. As many as are not written in that book shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Agree with thine adversary quickly. Kiss the Son! Accept at His hand deliverance for thy soul. (*T. J. Choate.*) *The kingdom and the keys* :—I. A VAST KINGDOM CLAIMED. To have "the keys" is to possess authority. To possess the key of a house, palace, or region, is to have the supreme power therein—the disposal of the things and persons located there. Among the Jews, a key borne on the shoulder, hung by a belt, or inwrought in the robe, was the well-known badge of office. Now, in the text, our Lord claims this supreme regal power for Himself. "I have the keys, and the houses, the palaces, the realms, whatever they are, to which these keys give admission, all are Mine. I possess them, I rule them, and from My decisions there is no appeal." Yes, this is the sovereign authority. A protest could be lodged, by the conscience at least, against the abuse of any kingly power on earth, and an appeal carried up to the court of heaven. But who shall dare protest against the decisions of the Son of Man? and to what court shall any cause be taken when solemn judgment has been pronounced at His bar? He has the keys—of what? Of earthly prisons? or of earthly palaces? of kingdoms? or continents? or seas? He does indeed possess even those keys; for all earthly kingdoms, with all their inhabitants and all their affairs, are comprehended within His royalty and realm; but the empire here is a far larger one. He has the keys "of Hades and of death." The keys of Hades and of death, *i.e.*, of the passage which leads from this world into that. All who leave this world, with some rare exceptions, to enter into that, go along the passage of death. Whether they go to glory or to gloom, they go by death, and the Redeemer has the keys of death. His dominion does not begin beyond the last barriers and confines of mortality; it is a power which commands those barriers, which claims death and holds its keys. Death and life, things present and things to come, height and depth, all are His. There is no realm of the universe for which He has not a key; there is no being whom He does not command; no event that He does not control. He has the key of birth, by the turning of which each is ushered into being; the key of childhood, which admits the little pilgrim to the first steps of the journey; the key of youth, which opens the gates into life's greenest and most radiant fields; the key of manhood, which sets the pilgrim on life's hill-top; the key of old age, which lets him gently down among the shadows; and the key of death, which ends all toil and sorrow. And of those great realms too, as we have seen, He has the keys: opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens. And of all which chequers life and gives character to it in its progress, He possesses the power. Majestic kingdom! whose lengths and breadths, and depths and heights far surpass our knowledge! over the vastness of which we can only look, but never travel! The interests of which we can think of, but never comprehend! The glories of which come only within the scope of one eye—the eye of omniscience. The powers of which rest only in the hands of one Being, and He the everlasting King! II. A ROYAL TITLE EXHIBITED. As creation supposes creator, and law supposes lawgiver, so kingdom supposes king; and the king of such a kingdom must have a royal title which cannot be impugned. "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen." This title, observe, does not rest on His Divinity alone; that He had from all eternity: nor on His humanity alone; for no mere man could hold space and time in His grasp; and rule life and death; and be the judge of quick and dead. It is a title wrought out by His incarnation, and inseparably connected with His mediatorial character. The substance of it is the life of the God-man with its sorrows, virtues, obedience.

It is written as with the blood of His Cross. The light by which we read it is the light of His resurrection. He was born that mothers might forget their sorrow, and rejoice when a man-child is born into the world. He prayed that He might be the hearer of prayer. He died that we might not fear to die, hoping to find life in Him. And now He has gone to claim His kingdom; He has received it from the Father, and through all its wide realms He exhibits His royal title—a title which all the good accept, and which the very devil dare not impugn. His title to this universal kingdom is our title to the blessings of grace and salvation. And so He tells us not to be afraid, for our enemies are vanquished; not to be ashamed, for our redemption draweth nigh. He teaches us to defy all antagonisms; to claim all needful helps; to put our proprietary seal upon every visible thing; to say, "All things are ours, for we are Christ's"; to open our hearts every day for grace; to hasten on every day to glory; to endow ourselves with His unsearchable riches, and to fill our souls unto all the fulness of God. III. THE GRACIOUS PROCLAMATION MADE. "Fear not." It is very brief. It is a dissuasion from all fear that "hath torment," from all undue anxiety and apprehension, from all excitement, foreboding, solicitude, which would bring pain. It affects all personal, all relative, and all religious and public interests. "Fear not" for thyself. I will wash thee thoroughly from thine iniquities, and cleanse thee from thy sins, create in thee a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within thee, give thee the joys of My salvation, and uphold thee with My free spirit. "Fear not" for any among thy kindred and acquaintance of the same family of God. There is a shield over the head of each, a Providence as watchful of every one as if that one alone were a dweller on the earth. "Fear not," amid changes however startling, circumstances however unexpected; for I am not a mere watcher over a broken and lawless world, mending, and checking, and trying to save something from the wreck! I am the perfect ruler of a perfect providence, setting kings on their thrones and watching sparrows in their fall; preserving your mightiest interests, and numbering the hairs of your head! Brethren, it is this "fear not" which often we most need to hear; we do not exercise ourselves in great matters—we can trust these to Him, for we feel they are too high for us; but we do painfully exercise ourselves in lesser things as if we had the sole charge of them. Not now, or not there, or not thus, we are always saying. Not now, we say, when the father is called to leave the family of which he is the sole stay. "Let him live, let a few years elapse, let his family be provided for, let his work be done!" It is done, is the answer. His fatherless children are provided for; I have taught him to leave them with Me. "The Father of the fatherless, the Husband of the widow, is God in His holy habitation." Or, we say, "Not there," oh, not there! Away on the sea—a thousand miles from land—let him not die there, and be dropped into the unfathomed grave. Or not in some distant city or far-off land—strangers around his bed, strangers closing his eyes, and then carrying him to a stranger's grave. Let him come home and die amid the whisperings and breathings of the old unquenchable love. "He is going home," is the answer, and going by the best and only way. "I can open the gate beautiful in any part of the earth or sea." Or, we say, "Not thus," not through such agonies of body, or faintings of spirit, or tremblings of faith—not in unconsciousness—not without dying testimonies. Oh, shed down the light, the fragrant of heaven, upon the dying bed! The answer is, "They are there, and you are so dull of sense that you perceive them not. Your friend is filled with the 'peace that passeth understanding,' and safe in the everlasting arms." (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The royal prerogatives of the living Redeemer:*—I. HE HAS ABSOLUTE POWER. 1. Christ's power is co-extensive with creation. Inorganic as well as organic substances are the Redeemer's servants, and He is "able to subdue all things unto Himself." 2. This power extends over the invisible world. II. HE POSSESSES THE HIGHEST LIFE. 1. This is life attained subsequently to dying. He poured out that last drop of life-blood to atone for sin, but He rose a Conqueror, and the King of glory. 2. This life is enjoyed in the most glorious destiny. He is above the tumult of sinners, and is the object of angelic rapture. 3. This life is endless. "I am alive for evermore," is the utterance of a Sublime Conqueror. The immortality of Christ's life, is the pledge of ours. III. HIS PREROGATIVES AS THE LIVING REDEEMER ARE EXERCISED FOR GLORIOUS PURPOSES. 1. They constitute Him a magnificent character. He is the most glorious Representative of power, life, and mercy to the universe. 2. This character He achieved by His work on earth. Enthroned in pomp and power, He does not forget Calvary; He connects His crown of life with His execution—"I am He that liveth, and was dead." 3. This

character so achieved is a mighty power for good. As the life of Titian, or Michael Angelo enters the soul of the student, so does the exalted life of Christ enter man's heart, and elevates him from the dust of sin to the fellowship of God; for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ, the righteous." 4. The influence of this character is felt in every event that takes place. Our lives are in Christ's hands. There is no chance work about life or death: we are dependent for either upon the will of our exalted Redeemer, who has "the keys of death and Hades." 5. This character attracts to the highest distinctions. The exalted Saviour has not only "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers," but He attracts them to it by the beauties of His life. "To be with Christ, which is far better" than dwelling on earth for ever, is the experience of all genuine Christians. (*J. H. Hill.*) *Christ's sovereignty over the invisible world:—I. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ANNIHILATION OF BODY AND SOUL HEREFTER.* Then I ask you, are you living in this belief in the immortality of the soul? Are you educating your families for God? Are you founding a family in heaven? Are you working in the fear of Him who "has the keys of hell and of death?" II. IF CHRIST HOLDS THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH, WE KNOW NOT THE DURATION OF OUR LIFE. LET US, THEN, WORK WHILE WE MAY, AND NOT BE SLOTHFUL. Why does Christ hold the keys? In mercy to us, to keep us from agitation and despair. If the time of our death were not a secret, we should have no comfort, and we should be ill fitted for the discharge of our duties. What did God send you into the world for? Not merely to eat, and drink, and sleep and transact worldly business: a beast or bird could live almost as useful, as noble a life. This little span is the threshold of Hades, the prelude of millions of ages in a sphere fitted to your nature, where the soul's aspirations shall not be clogged and fettered, and often brought to nought, by the grossness of this present body; where the thirst for knowledge shall be fully and eternally gratified; where the heart shall drink ever most deeply into the felt love of God; where we shall, with the noble assembly of ransomed saints and preserved angels, find in the presence of God and of the Lamb employment for those vast powers of the soul, of the existence of which powers we are sometimes permitted to get faint ideas. Oh! live for this.

III. CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, HOLDS DOMINION OVER HADES AND DEATH; THEREFORE THE CHURCH NEED NOT FEAR DEATH. Glorious Captain of our salvation! who could withstand Thee? Thou hast abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. Death was a curse; Thou has turned it into a blessing. What amazing power! Death was an enemy; Thou hast converted it into a friend. What admirable wisdom! So to baffle and disappoint the plotting spirit of evil. IV. IF CHRIST HOLDS THE KEYS OF HADES AND OF DEATH, MEN DO NOT DIE BY CHANCE, BUT BY APPOINTMENT; THEREFORE WE SHOULD BE MODERATE IN OUR SORROW FOR DEPARTED FRIENDS. (*W. J. Chapman, M.A.*) *Christ with the keys of death and hell:—*Then hell and death, terrible powers as they are, are not left to riot without government. Let us rejoice that nothing in heaven, or earth, or in places under the earth, is left to itself to engender anarchy. Everywhere, serene above the floods, the Lord sitteth King for ever and ever. I. What is intended by THE POWER OF THESE KEYS here mentioned? 1. A key is first of all used for opening, and hence our Lord can open the gates of death and hell. 2. But a key is also used to shut the door, and even so Jesus will both shut in and shut out. His golden key will shut his people in heaven, as Noah was shut in the ark. Heaven is the place of eternal safety. There the gates shall be fast shut by which their foes could enter, or by which their joys could leave them. But, alas! there is the dark side to this shutting of the gate. It is Christ who with His key shall shut the gates of heaven against unbelievers. 3. By the keys we must further understand here that our Lord rules, for the key is the Oriental metaphor for government. He shall have the key of David: "the government shall be upon His shoulder." 4. One more remark is wanted to complete the explanation of the power of the keys. Our Lord is said to have the keys of death, from which we gather that all the issues of death are at His alone disposal. II. What is THE KEY OF THIS POWER? Whence did Christ obtain this right to have the keys of hell and death? 1. Doth He not derive it first of all from His Godhead? In the eighteenth verse, He saith, "I am He that liveth," language which only God can use, for while we live, yet it is only with a borrowed life. God saith, "I am, and there is none beside Me," and Jesus being God, claimeth the same self-existence. "I am He that liveth." Now, since Christ is God, He certainly hath power over heaven, and earth, and hell. 2. But the key to this power lies also in our Saviour's conquests. He hath the keys of death and hell because He hath actually conquered both these powers. You know how He met

hell in the dreadful onset in the garden ; how all the powers of darkness there combined against Him. Grim was the contest, but glorious was the victory, worthy to be sung by angels in eternal chorus. 3. We have one more truth to remember, that Jesus Christ is installed in this high place of power and dignity by the Father Himself, as a reward for what He has done. He was Himself to "divide the spoil with the strong," but the Father had promised to give Him a "portion with the great."

III. THE PRACTICAL BEARING of the whole subject appears to be this—"Fear not." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Hades, or the Unseen* :—I. I propose to EXPLAIN WHAT I MEAN BY HADES. The term signifies the place Unseen ; or, more properly, the Unseen. And by the Unseen I understand a place or state distinct from the grave, which receives only the bodies, while it, in its awful circle, includes the souls of the departed—different from Gehenna, or the Lake of Fire, which engulfs ultimately both the bodies and the souls of the lost—distinct from heaven, where "summer high in bliss" the angelic spirits, and where, like a mount of diamond, arises the throne of God ! As to its character, it is invisible to mortal eye, and inaccessible to human footstep. It is probably divided into two compartments ; the one containing, as in a prison, the souls of the wicked ; the other, as in a place of safe keeping, preserving the spirits of the just. It has been asked, Shall this Hades be properly a place or a state ? Some argue that spirits separated from their bodies cannot be confined to, or connected with, any particular place, but may, nay must, be at large through the vast spaces of the universe. But it would rather appear that (as has been said by the intrepid Bishop of St. Asaph) "to exist without relation to place seems to be one of the incommunicable properties of the Divine nature ; and it is hardly to be conceived that any created spirit, of however high an order, can be without locality, or without such determination of its existence, at any given time, to some certain place, that it shall be true to say of it, 'Here it is, and not elsewhere ;'" and that, therefore, there is somewhere a particular spot where all separated spirits reside. Another question irresistibly occurs, Where is this place situated ? Some maintain that it lies in the bowels of the earth, and ground this opinion upon the fact that the language of Scripture frequently represents the dead as gone downwards—upon the fact that Christ is said to have descended into the lower parts of the earth ; upon the fact that all nations, in all ages, have supposed the abode of the dead to be beneath. But without venturing further into this dark and doubtful field, I remark once more, that this state is not an ultimate or everlasting state.

II. I would DISABUSE YOUR MINDS OF SOME MISCONCEPTIONS OF THIS DOCTRINE. You are not, then, in the first place, to confound Hades with Purgatory, or to suppose that it gives, in the slightest degree, countenance to that wretched fiction of the Roman Catholic Church. The two places are essentially distinct. Hades is a place both of woe and of enjoyment, each unmingled in its kind. In Purgatory there is no joy at all, and the misery inflicted is for the purpose of rendering its victims fit for the enjoyments of heaven, and free from the torments of hell. Again, I beg of you not to suppose that this is a new doctrine. It is as old as the Old Testament. III. I come now to ARGUE THE POINT FROM SCRIPTURE. I might, indeed, have found plausible probabilities in support of it. It is probable that for souls separated from their bodies there should be a place set apart. God has provided distinct habitations for every other separate variety of created objects. He has provided the land for terrestrial quadrupeds ; it is their world. He has provided the sea for fish ; it is their peculiar province and native element. He has provided the air for birds. For angels He has expanded heaven ; and for devils laid the dark foundations of hell. Why should He not, then, on the same principle, have prepared a separate abode for a class of beings so essentially distinct from every other in the universe, as separate spirits, which are neither angels nor devils, nor properly speaking, men ? Separate spirits, however perfect in nature, are obviously in an imperfect or unfinished state. Wanting their material frames, they are comparatively naked ; unsheathed in sense, they cannot hold such free intercourse with material things. It seems fit, therefore, that a kind of hiding-place should be provided for them. But is Scripture quite silent on the theme ? No ; it utters a distinct, if not a deafening sound. 1. Hades, in Scripture, is quite a different place from hell. The real terms in Holy Writ for hell are, Gehenna or Tophet, or the Lake of Fire. Hades is never, we believe, used to denote hell properly so called. It is sometimes used in connections where it must mean some other place—"Death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire." How absurd it were to speak of hell being cast into hell ! "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol or Hades." Here, assuredly, the term cannot mean hell, else it will follow

that Christ's soul went down alive into that fearful pit, and shared there in the torments of the damned—a horrible supposition. It follows, therefore, inevitably, that the place where Christ went down was not the place of final punishment. But that place was Hades. But neither is it heaven by the same showing, since it were absurd to speak of Christ's soul being not left there. Neither can it be the grave, since into the grave His soul never went, and from it could never have risen. 2. The fact that Christ did go to Hades proves that His people must go too; and that He went there is undeniable. Look, again, at the 2nd chapter of the Acts, 31st verse, where Peter, after having quoted David's language in the 16th Psalm, adds, "He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell (or Hades), neither did His flesh see corruption." It follows, demonstrably, that if His soul was not left in Hades, in Hades it must have been. Again, in the 4th chapter of the Ephesians, at the 9th verse, we find the following words: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" What were these lower parts of the earth? Surely they included Hades. It is vain to tell us that they denote simply the fact that His body descended into the grave. Did His body alone ascend into the heavens? Is not the He who ascended the very He who descended? If He ascended body and spirit, must He not have descended body and spirit too? And if He descended in spirit, where but to Hades could that spirit have gone? If Christ went to Hades, it follows that His people go too. We argue this from His language to the penitent thief,—“To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,” which means some place of happiness where the twain were to meet that very day. It could not be heaven, since Christ went not there till His ascension. IV. But I come to ANSWER SOME OF THE MORE PROMINENT OBJECTIONS TO THIS VIEW. 1. Some will say: Is not Hades, according to this doctrine, a prison; and how can a prison be, in any sense, or to any parties, a place of happiness? I simply answer: Why should it not? Is not a prison a place of safe-keeping? Are not the innocent kept in prison equally with the guilty till the day of trial? Hades to the good may be a prison; but such a prison as is a house in a day of storm—such a prison as is woven by a mother's arms round her dear babe. 2. Is not this a damping view? I have always, says a Christian, expected that when I died I should go to the highest heaven. But what if you were expecting wrong? Will not the society of thy departed friends be a source of deep gladness to thee in that strange world? It is a mere vulgar error to seek to confine happiness within the compass of even the highest heaven. No; it shall overflow into Hades. 3. It will be said: How do these views agree with the expressions of Paul—"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better; to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord"? And will there not, in Hades, be a revelation of Christ far brighter than the most favoured of His people ever can enjoy upon earth, even though His personal presence be absent? To a disembodied spirit what is personal presence? Can we conceive of it without eyes seeing His comeliness; without ears hearing His voice; without hands handling His sides; without feet standing beside Him, on that firm and lofty ground which borders His great high throne? Is not "seeing Christ as He is" expressly stated to be contemporaneous with His future and final appearance? "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is." Ought a Christian to have no loftier ambition? Is not a spiritual vision of the moral and spiritual Jesus, of the depth of His wisdom, and the warmth of His love, equally desirable with a sight of His person? V. But HOW DOES THIS CONSORT WITH THE COMMON VIEW WHICH HOLDS THAT WICKED MEN GO IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH TO THE EVIL ONE, AND THAT HIS PRESENCE AND AGENCY CONSTITUTE A LARGE PART OF THEIR TORMENT? I am not careful to answer in this matter. I know already that the influences of the Evil Spirit are not confined to hell; they are felt on earth, and they may, for aught I know, be extended to Hades too. Whether the devil in personal subsistence shall be present with his victims there, is a question that cannot be resolved, and which is not worth solution. But what are we to understand by Stephen's vision, taken in connection with his prayer "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." No more, probably, than this, that Christ, through His almighty power and Divine spirit, receives the spirits of His people when they die, saves them from the power of the enemy, acquits them, and bestows them in safe keeping, in the hollow of His hand, till dawns the day of supreme and eternal decision. But has there not been generally thought to be a judgment after death, and does not this imply that every spirit shall, unless chased away by His frown and its own wickedness, find immediate refuge in the "bosom of its Father and its

God"? But where shall this judgment take place? Must it be necessarily in the highest heavens? May it not take place in the very room where the man has just gasped his last, or at the gate of Hades? The place of the general judgment is plainly declared, that of the personal and private tribunal is left in awful uncertainty. But again, it may be asked, can it be conceived that the spirits of the just and of the unjust are included in the same place? We ask: Why not? We quote not "Let both grow until the harvest or end of the world," because the reference in that passage is to this world, not to the next. But, we ask: Why, though the place be one, should not the lines of demarcation be numerous, and distinct, and deep? Will not the great laws of moral attraction, which partially operate even here—drawing together similar spirits by a mighty assimilating and converging process—there have their perfect work, and account for the greatness of the gulf which separates the one side of Hades from Abraham's bosom? It remains that we find, in fine, the uses of this doctrine. 1. Is it true? Then it must have its good uses; and then the responsibility of it is shifted back from us upon the everlasting arms of the God of Truth Himself. No seed of truth can produce evil consequences, or fail to produce good. 2. It gives an enlarged view of God's universe. It points out, to those, I mean, who have recently heard of it for the first time, a new province in the Almighty's dominions. 3. This doctrine is cheering to the Christian—cheering both as it confutes the gloomy doctrines of materialism and the sleep of the soul; and as it divides to him the awful ladder of approach to the supreme summit and pinnacle of the heavens. We tremble at the thought of being introduced suddenly, and at once, among the ancients of the heavenly world—into the centre of the circle of eternity—and amid the blaze of those starry splendours, at which "angels tremble as they gaze." This doctrine shows believers an intermediate stage—an harbour on their far pilgrimage—a gentler and a milder light, through which they pass into the "perfect day." Once more, it is full of terrors to the wicked. It holds out to them the prospect of looking forward from Hades to a gulf deeper and darker still, into which they shall yet be plunged. It tells them that their misery shall not be consummated at once, but shall go on by distinct and terrible stages towards its completion. (*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*)

Vers. 19, 20. *Write the things which thou hast seen.—Christ enjoining the record of His revelation to man and explaining its meaning:*—These words suggest two general remarks concerning Christ. I. HE REQUIRES MEN TO RECORD THE REVELATIONS HE MAKES TO THEM. 1. Those which had been experienced. 2. Those things which were now present. 3. Those which were approaching. Now these three classes of things John had to write down. Whatever man has seen, or will see of the Divine, he is bound to record—"Write." Literature, though sadly corrupted and the source of enormous mischief, is a Divine institution. Rightly employed it is one of the grandest forces in human life. Thank God for books, our best companions, always ready with their counsel and their comfort. They arearks that have borne down to us, over the floods of centuries, the vital germs of departed ages. II. HE EXPLAINS TO MEN THE MEANING OF THE REVELATION HE MAKES TO THEM. 1. The unknown of the knowable. What is mystery to one man is not so to another; and what is mystery to a man to-day is no mystery to-morrow. 2. The unknown of the unknowable. He whom we call God is the great mystery, the absolutely unknowable—whom no man hath seen or can see. Now in the former sense the meaning of the word "mystery" is here employed. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Sacred literature:*—I. THAT IT CONTAINS THE RECORD OF THINGS WHICH THE AUTHORS HAVE SEEN. 1. Which men have seen with the eye of the body. 2. Things which the authors have seen with the eye of the mind. 3. Things which the authors have seen with the eye of the soul. II. THAT IT CONTAINS THE RECORD OF THINGS WHICH ARE HAPPENING AROUND US. "And the things which are." The Bible records the history of the past ages, of a great antiquity, and in this coincides with our expectation; but it also touches the moral, political, and historic life of men to-day. God knew the ages before they commenced their march, and has enabled men to anticipate their meaning by the gift of a holy inspiration. III. THAT IT CONTAINS THE RECORD OF THINGS WHICH PERTAIN TO THE FUTURE. "And the things which shall be hereafter." (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Concerning writing:*—1. That men may by writing communicate what light God gives them for the good of the Church. It is true the Gospel was at first spread and planted by preaching, that is more properly the means of conversion. There is reason also for this, if we consider (1) The relation that is amongst all the members of the Catholic Church, whereby all are tied, to be edifying

one to another, &c. (2) The end wherefore God had given men gifts, which is to profit withal: and yet (3) That a man cannot by word make his gift forthcoming in the extent that he is obliged; there is therefore a necessity of using writing for that end, it being a singular gift of God for promoting edification. 2. That none should take on them to write anything, as the Lord's mind, for the edification of the Church, without a call to it: I mean not an extraordinary call, as John had; but this I mean, that as there is an ordinary call needful to the preaching of the Gospel, so, in the general, that same consequence will hold in respect of writing for such an end. And if we look through the Scripture, we will find a call for writing as well as for preaching. And to warrant writing, we would conceive so much to be necessary as may (1) Satisfy the man himself as to his being called to such an eminent duty by God, and therefore there must be somewhat to hold out to him that it is God's mind he should undertake such a task. (2) That men walk not by their own satisfaction alone; but that there may be so much as to convince others, that God put them on that work. 3. That a man therefore may have peace as to his undertaking, we conceive there is a concurrence of several things needful to be observed: As (1) There is a necessity of a single end, to wit, God's glory, others' edification; and in part may come in, his own exoneration as to such a duty. It is not self-seeking, nor getting of a name, nor strengthening such a particular party or opinion, that will give one peace in this matter. (2) It is necessary, not only that the thing be truth; but that it may be edifying, profitable, and pertinent, at such a time: God's call to anything, doth ever time it, and tryst it well, as most subservient to the scope of edification. (3) Besides these, there are circumstances in the concurrence of providences trysting together, in reference to the person writing, to the subject written of, the time wherein and occasion whereupon, and such like: which being observed, may contribute to give some light in the thing. As (a) If the person be called publicly to edify the Church; if he be of that weight, as his testimony may prove profitable in the Church for the strengthening and confirming of others, or the like considerations; though no new thing be brought forth by him: which ground, as a moral reason, Luke gives to Theophilus of his writing the Gospel (Luke i. 1). (b) Considerations may be drawn from the subject. As (i.) If it be a necessary point that is controverted. (ii.) If the Scripture opened be dark and obscure; and possibly not many satisfyingly writing of it. (iii.) If the way of handling it be such as gives any new advantage to truth, or to the opening of that Scripture. (c) The time would be considered, if such a truth be presently controverted, or such a subject necessary to be spoken unto now; if such a person's interposing may be useful, if such a duty be neglected, or if such a Scripture be not made use of, and the like. (d) Occasion also may be, from God's putting one to have thoughts of such a subject when others are otherwise taken up, some not having access to be edifying otherwise; as when occasion of study is given, and the thing by public delivery or secret communication is known to others, and called for by them to be made public: or that they would set themselves to it, God giving occasion of health, quietness, means, &c., for it: the thing getting approbation from such as are single, and intelligent, judging such a thing useful; in this the spirits of God's servants would be subject to others. (*James Durham.*) **The mystery of the seven stars . . . and the seven golden candlesticks.**—*The stars and candlesticks:*—It is the realm in which they are stationed, and its characteristics as indicated in the provision made for it. Where you see stars there is darkness. And how dark is that world, that kingdom, that community, that heart, into which the light of Christianity has not effectually penetrated? With all the splendour of its genius, all the glory of its arms, all the brilliancy of its power, how savage, how like a sepulchre, full of chilly gloom and festering death! When the Gospel first arose upon the world, in what state did it find mankind? Let the apostle answer (Rom. i. 22-32). And when God's messengers came to them with the light of truth and righteousness, how were they treated? Let the same apostle answer (Heb. xi. 35-38). Even the Lord of the covenant was crucified and killed, and all His apostles martyred, and the Church's first age made one continuous baptism of blood by the enthroned malignity of the unsanctified heart. Such is humanity, unreached and unredeemed by the grace of God in Christ Jesus (Luke x. 3). Those stars and candlesticks have not been useless. Some hearts, communities, and kingdoms have been attracted by the light, and have learned to appreciate its transforming beauty, and are found to a greater or less degree walking and rejoicing in it. But still the world in the main is a dark and wicked world. The light sent of God is "a light that shineth in a dark place," and will so continue "until the day dawn" for the great

consummation. Till then, therefore, we must expect to suffer and to fight. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The seven golden lampstands*:—I. A CHURCH'S BUSINESS IS TO HOLD UP THE LIGHT. A church which fails in aggressive evangelistic activity has failed utterly. What is the good of a lamp-post if there is no light in it? It is only a nuisance, for people to knock their heads against in the dark. A large number of the so-called Christian organisations of this day are lampstands without a light. But then, let us remember, too, that whilst thus one must strongly assert that the function of the Church is to lift up a light which is not its own, on the other hand, whosoever partakes of that light—which he cannot lift unless he loves—is changed into its nature. "Ye are the light of the world." They are made light by contact with the Light; as a mirror laid in the sunshine will reflect the beams that fall upon it, and will cast them into some corners which, without its intervention, they would not have reached, and will be capable of being gazed on with undazzled eye by some whose optics were too weak to look upon the light itself. Now the scope of this light-bearing and witnessing for Jesus Christ which is the purpose of the Church, and of each individual in it, is not to be unduly narrowed. The Christian community is bound to bring the principles of Christ's Gospel to bear upon all forms of life, individual, social, moral, and political, and sometimes economical. That is the function of the individual members of the Church because they are Christians. There is one more word I would like to say, and that is, if it is the purpose of a Christian Church to hold forth the light, how utterly irrelevant and puerile becomes the question whether we are to send the Gospel to distant lands, and how ridiculous the attempt to pit home against foreign evangelistic enterprise necessarily becomes. "Light is light, which radiates," and you may as well expect a sunbeam to elect upon which side it shall shine, and how far it shall travel, as try to prescribe to the expansive and outward-rushing instincts of Christian beneficence, the sphere within which they are to confine themselves. Where I can shine I am bound to shine, and England has not got the language that is going to fill the world in a century or two, and the religion which will bless humanity, only in order that with her world-wide empire she may have markets for her produce, or gather as in a net the riches of the nations. II. THIS OFFICE IS THE CONJOINT BUSINESS OF THE WHOLE CHURCH. You have sometimes seen methods of illumination by which a rough triangle of wood is dotted all over with tin sockets, and tapers stuck in them. That is not the way in which a Church is to do its evangelising work. The symbol of our text gives a better metaphor—one lampstand holding one light. Now that contains two thoughts. 1. One is the universal obligation. It is the whole Church which composes the stand for the lamp. It is the whole of any Church which is bound equally to evangelistic effort. We are all disposed to think that the Church should do a deal. What about A., B., C., the members of it? It is their business. And it only becomes the duty of the community because it is the duty of each individual within it. 2. A second thought is combined action. We must be contented often to be insignificant, to do functional work, to be one of the great crowd whose hand on the rope gives an indivisible but to Him up yonder not imperceptible pull to bring the vessel to shore. There are a myriad little spheres in the raindrops which make the rainbow, and each of them has a little rainbow in its own tiny depths, but they all fuse together into the sevenfold arch of perfect beauty that spans the sky. III. THIS OFFICE IS DISCHARGED UNDER THE INSPECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. According to the vision of which the text is the interpretation Christ is, and according to the words of one of the letters He walks, in the midst of the seven candlesticks. The presence of the Christ is the condition of the churches discharging their functions. "He walks," says the letter already referred to, "in their midst," which is the emblem of His continual activity. In so far as we are lights, we are lights kindled, and therefore burning away. There must be a continual replenishing of the inward supply from which the power of illumination comes, as is set forth in another instance in the Old Testament in which this symbol appears—viz., in Zechariah's prophecy, where he sees the arrangements by which the oil is fed to the golden candlestick. The oil must be fed to us, in so far as we are not lampstands, but lamps. That is to say, the great High Priest of the Temple moves as His predecessors did in the ancient sanctuary, and trims the lamps, not quenching the smoking flax, but raising it to a clearer flame. That presence stimulates. It is a solemn thought that He walks in the midst. It is made more solemn when we remember how, in these letters that follow my text, there is in each case repeated, "I know thy works." That inspection of our acts is not all that He is here for, thank God! but He is here for that. Oh, if we

believed it, what different people we should be, and what a different Church this would be! (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The seven golden candlesticks*:—Your attention will be called to the striking symbol of the Church, as exhibited by the golden candlestick, which, like that which stood in the tabernacle, had its seven branches. We notice the fitness of this symbol of the golden candlestick. I. IN ITS POSITION. The Church of Christ still waits without the veil, and sheds her blessed light to show to the world the Saviour. II. THE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH. It does not sanctify, nor save, but it does hold forth the true light, and shed its brightness on a darkened world. III. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. IV. THE SOURCE OF LIFE TO THE CHURCH. V. THE BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH AND HER HOLY SERVICES. VI. THE VALUE OF THE CHURCH. (*J. H. Norton.*) *Things common to all churches*:—I. THAT ALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OUGHT TO BE PRESIDED OVER BY COMPETENT AND DULY-QUALIFIED PASTORS. 1. That all Christian Churches should be presided over by a recognised pastor. 2. That the pastor is the head and representative of the Church to which he belongs. 3. That the pastor exercises a great moral influence upon the Church with which he is connected. II. THAT ALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ARE UNDER THE PERSONAL SCRUTINY OF CHRIST. 1. Christ knows the Church. This thought should solemnise our Church life, and make it reverent in its disposition of soul. 2. Christ rules the Church. His rulership is for the moral welfare and defence of the Church, and should be obediently acknowledged. 3. Christ passes judgment on the Church. He passes judgment on the works, the patience, the suffering, the discipline, the creed, and the enthusiasm of the Church, and condemns or approves accordingly. III. THAT ALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ARE ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL CONFLICT. IV. THAT ALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES SHOULD BE SENSITIVE TO THE REVELATION OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT. LESSONS:—1. That the ministerial office has the sanction of Heaven. 2. That Churches should be careful in the selection of their pastor. 3. That Churches should seek to cultivate a pure and fervent spiritual life. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-7. Ephesus.—*The address to Ephesus*:—I. THE FORM OF ADDRESS. 1. The place. Ephesus. Situated in a rich and extensive country, and upon the banks of a luxuriant river, it became, in all probability, celebrated for the pleasures of the chase, on which account its richest offerings were presented on the shrine of Diana. It was in its greatest glory in the apostolic age, its population at that time amounting to some hundreds of thousands. The ruins of its theatre still remain, which is computed to have accommodated twenty thousand spectators. Its commerce, its literature, its opulence, and its luxury were in similar proportion. 2. The Church of Ephesus. (1) How great were the advantages which the Ephesian Church enjoyed! The foundation is laid during a few months' visit from the great apostle of the Gentiles. It is sustained by the labours of Priscilla and Aquila. It is favoured with the discourses of the eloquent Apollos. It next enjoys the entire ministrations of Paul for two years and three months. He is succeeded by Timothy, of whom Paul says, he knew no man so like-minded with himself, who evidently gave the prime of his days to the Ephesians. A most instructive and encouraging letter is sent them by Paul, for their guidance both in doctrine and practice. Timothy receives full instructions from the apostle for the performance of his pastoral duties among them. And to crown all their privileges, during the apostolic age, John, the last of the apostles, gives them the benefit of the rich experience of his latter days, and the benedictions of his last breath. (2) The chief difficulties with which the gospel had to contend in this city. (a) The prejudices of the Jews. (b) The pride of human learning. (c) The influence of a popular idolatry and an interested priesthood. (d) The effect of riches. (e) Sensual indulgence. (3) The gospel when faithfully preached, and accompanied by pastoral visits and fervent prayer, will surmount all opposition, and extensively prevail. 3. The angel of the Church at Ephesus. 4. The character in which Christ addresses this Church. II. THE SUBJECT OF COMMUNICATION. 1. The Ephesians are commended here for their zealous and active performance of Christian duties; for their patience and submission under trial and persecution; and for

their purity of discipline. 2. He has something against them, as well as in their favour. He does not dispute the sincerity of their love, but reproves them for its diminished fervour. It was not so pure, burning, and enkindling as at first. Diminution of love in His people is displeasing to Christ, on their account as well as His own. Love is the fruit of all other graces of the Christian combined. If this decays, the whole work of grace in the soul is on the decline. 3. The admonition: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen," &c. 4. The threatening: "Or else I will come unto thee quickly," &c. Unless the flame of love be kept bright and glowing, He will withdraw His support. He will not hold up an expiring lamp. The light of the gospel is not extinguished, but is removed from one place to another. If it has become dim, or ceased to shine in one part of the earth, it burns with brilliancy in another. While its first fervour was declining in Judæa, it burst forth in the cities of the Gentiles. The gospel seeks the hearts of men. If they are withheld in one place, it seeks them in another. 5. The closing commendation: "But this thou hast," &c. III. A GENERAL APPLICATION is appended to the address to the Church at Ephesus, and the same order is observed in the rest: "He that hath an ear, let him hear," &c. (G. Rogers.) *Ephesus—the strenuous Church*:—Ephesus is the type of a strenuous Church. There is something singularly masculine in the first part of the description. "I know thy works"—that is, thine achievements; not thy desires and purposes and aspirations, not even thy doings, but thy deeds. This Church in its severe self-discipline affords a welcome contrast to the easily-excited populace amid whom they lived, rushing confusedly into the theatre and shouting for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The patience of the Church is twice mentioned; the second time it is patience not as a feature of the workman, but the patience of him who can suffer, and suffer in silence. And this virtue has a three-fold delineation—patience, endurance, fortitude. "Thou hast patience, and thou didst bear for My name's sake, and thou hast not grown weary." There is another mark of the masculine character in Ephesus, a noble intolerance of evil—"thou canst not bear bad men." And with this intolerance is the power to discriminate character, the clear judgment which cannot be deceived—"thou didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false." There is no surer mark of a masculine nature than this keen insight into pretentiousness, and fidelity of rebuke. Then comes the exposure of the great defect of Ephesus. "I have against thee that thou hast left that love which thou hadst at the first." It is love in its largest sense which the Church once had and now has lost; the love of God animating piety undoubtedly, but no less certainly the love of men making service sweet. Nor is it the feeling alone which has changed, it is not that love as a sentiment is lost; but love in its far reach has gone, kindness and tender consideration and disregard of self, the grace that suffers long and is kind, that beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things. The toilsomeness, the endurance, the stern self-judgment, the keen discrimination of character, are obvious; but the spirit that rises above toil or sweetens toil, the grace to woo and wed, has fled. We can understand the history only too well. Life has many sore trials, none sorer than this—that virtues which are unexercised die out, and that the circumstances which call for some virtues and give occasion for their development seem to doom others to extinction. The Christian character cannot live by severity alone. There were two demands which the Church at Ephesus had forgotten—the demand for completeness of Christian character, never more urgent than when the times are making us one-sided; the demand of God Himself for the heart. There must be impulse in His people if they are to continue His people; there must be love in all who, not contented with doing "their works," desire to do the work of God. I. There is an obscured, a limited perception of the grace of Christ. "These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars," &c. A strenuous Lord for a strenuous Church; but also a Lord holding His manifold graces in reserve when He has to do with a reserved people. For the nurture of piety we need all that He will reveal to us of Himself, all that can endear Him, all that can startle us, all that can exalt His image. There is not a single channel by which Christ finds His way to the soul which should not be open to Him; a full Christ is needed for a full man and for a complete Church. II. The warning of the fifth verse must have been very surprising to the angel of the Ephesian Church. The Church seemed to be so efficient. Its works had been so hard, and yet they had been done. Its achievements were patent. Especially its service in the cause of truth was conspicuous; the Church had not lost its zeal, its candour, its piercing vision. Ephesus warns

us against the perils of the Puritan temper; it warns us also against the stoical temper, with its tendency to a not ignoble cynicism, of which some of our gravest leaders in literature have been the exponents. Puritanism plus love has accomplished great things, and will do yet more; for a masculine tenderness is God's noblest gift to men. But Puritanism, when the first love is lost, drags on a sorrowful existence, uninfluential and unhappy; its only hope being the capacity for repentance, which, God be praised, has never failed it. Perhaps the most solemn part of the message is that in which the Lord Himself declares—"I am coming; I will shake thy candlestick out of its place." The Lord can do without our achievements, but not without love. He can supply gifts unendingly, can make the feeble as David; but if love be wanting He will shake the noblest into destruction, and remove them out of the way. There is one striking word immediately following this warning, a word of commendation; it is the only one of the messages in which a word of commendation does come in after the warning has been uttered, and it is a commendation of feeling. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest," &c. Hatred is hardly the feeling we should have expected to be commended: but it is feeling, and any feeling is better than apathy or stolidity. Where men can feel hatred, other feeling may come; love may come where men have not reduced themselves to machines. III. An altogether unexpected thing in the message to the Church at Ephesus is the promise with which it ends—"To him that overcometh," &c. In only two promises of the New Testament does this word "paradise" appear, with its suggestion of the primeval garden, where the father and mother of men wandered innocent and happy: in the promise made by the dying Jesus to the penitent thief, and here. The faithful men of Ephesus, stern-featured, with drawn brows, fighting on, knowing that their hearts are withering in the conflict, and yet not seeing how they can relax, are caught with a word. An image is presented to them which may break down even their self-control, and set them longing for the wondrous things God hath prepared for them that love Him. And this was exactly what Ephesus needed, although it was the one thing it had schooled itself to do without. Ephesus had too little of what so many have too much of—sensibility, passiveness, willingness to receive, to be made something of, to be quiet and let the Blessed One save them who had long been striving, and of late so ineffectually, to serve Him. Good as strenuousness is—and of human virtues it is among the chief—even better is the responsive spirit. When God is the giver, it is well for us to receive rather than to give. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *Letter to Ephesus*:—I. THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH HAS A MINUTE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THE SERVICES OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. There is distinguished labour. "I know thy works, and thy labour." The Church at Ephesus had been a working Church. It had been operating on the surrounding regions of depravity, darkness, and death. In its early life it was eminently an aggressive Church. I would have Christ's Church as ambitious as Alexander. As he waved his battle-flag over a conquered world, so would I that the Church might unfurl the banner of a nobler conquest over every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue. 2. There is distinguished patience. This patience may be understood as indicating long-suffering in relation to those by whom the saints in Ephesus were surrounded—long-suffering both in waiting for the germination of the seed which they had sown in many tears, and in the meek endurance of fiery trials. The point to be noted here is, that Christ is mindful, not only of the outward manifestations of the spiritual life—such as many labours and many offerings—but also of the hidden graces which cluster round the heart. He sees not only the moral warrior brandishing his sword in the thickest of the battle, but also the wounded and suffering soldier; and sweetly says to such, "I know thy patience." How few can tone themselves to the high strength of doing everything by doing nothing! Patience is undervalued by an excited world; but Jesus notes it in its long vigils, marks it trimming its dim lamp in the solemn midnight, and sweetly whispers His word of commendation, which is always invigorating as the breath of immortality. 3. There is distinguished jealousy for the right. "Thou canst not bear them which are evil," &c. It must ever be remembered that there is a spurious charity. It is morally impossible that Christians and anti-Christians can have any sympathetic fellowship. Woe unto the Church when moral distinctions are lightly regarded! To confound light with darkness, sweetness with bitterness, is to mock the first principles of holy government, and to destroy for ever the possibility of holy brotherhood. While, therefore, we would not presumptuously ascend the judgment-seat, we believe it is impossible to burn in too deeply the line

which separates the sympathy of compassion from the sympathy of complacency. 3. There was distinguished persistence in the right course. "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." The eulogium might be read thus: "I know thy labour, and yet thou dost not labour, *i.e.*, thou dost not make a labour of thy duties": in such case duty was not a hard taskmaster. There was such a sunny joyousness and musical cordiality about these saints, that they came to their work—work so hard—with the freshness of morning, and under their touch duty was transformed into privilege. There is a lesson here for Christian workers through all time. When work is done with the hand only, it is invariably attended with much constraint and difficulty; but when the heart is engaged, the circle of duty is run with a vigour that never wearies and a gladness which never saddens. Not only so, the Ephesian saints eminently succeeded in uniting patience with perseverance. They were not only patient in suffering, but patient in labour. They did not expect the morning to be spring and the evening to be autumn, but, having due regard to the plan of Divine procedure, combined in wise proportions the excitement of war with the patience of hope. The Ephesians were right: they blended persistence with patience, and were extolled by Him who knew the hardest toil, and exemplified the most uncomplaining endurance. The fundamental point is, that Christ knew all this. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." There is not a toiler in the vineyard on whose bent form the Master looks not with approbation. He sees the sufferer also. All that He observes influences His mediation, so that in every age "He tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb." II. THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH MARKS EVERY DECLENSION OF PIETY. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." This method of reproof is eminently suggestive. It gives a lesson to parents. Would you be successful in reproving your children? Let commendation precede rebuke; let your "nevertheless" be winged with love and hope, and it will fly to the farthest boundary of your child's intellectual and moral nature, and showers of blessings will be shaken from those heavenly wings. It gives a lesson to pastors also. Our words of remonstrance or rebuke will be more successful as they are preceded by every acknowledgment which justice and generosity can suggest. When the Master is compelled, so to speak, to rebuke His Church, He proceeds as though He would gladly turn. The rebuke comes with a hesitation which did not mark the eulogy. He resorts to a negative form of statement—"Thou hast left thy first love." Look at the declension spoken of. 1. This declension is described as having begun in the heart. Christ does not charge the saints at Ephesus with having changed their doctrinal views; but, placing His finger on the heart, says, "There is a change here." You know the enthusiasm of "first love." If any work is to be done in the Church—if any difficulties are to be surmounted—if any icebergs are to be dissolved—if any cape, where savage seas revel in ungovernable madness, is to be rounded, send out men and women in whose hearts this "first love" burns and sings, and their brows will be girt with garlands of conquest. Our business, then, is to watch our heart-fires. When the temperature of our love lowers, there is cause for terror. It is instructive to mark the many and insidious influences by which the gush and swell of affection are modified. Take the case of one who has been distinguished for much service in the cause of God, and see how the fires pale. He becomes prosperous in business. His oblations on the altar of Mammon are costlier than ever. He toils in the service of self until his energies are nearly exhausted, and then his class in the school is neglected; the grass grows on his tract district; his nature has become so perverted that he almost longs for an occasion of offence, that he may retire from the duties of the religious life. Could you have heard him in the hour of his new-born joy, when he first placed his foot in God's kingdom, you would not have thought that he ever could have been reduced to so low a moral temperature. What holy vows escaped him! How rich he was in promise! But look at him now; turn the leaves over, and with eager eyes search for fruit, and say, Is the promise of spring redeemed in autumn? Innumerable influences are continually in operation, which would cool the ardour of our first enthusiasm for Christ. Satan plies us with his treacherous arts; the world allures us with its transitory charms; our inborn depravity reveals itself in ever-varying manifestations; pride and selfishness, ambition and luxury, appeal to us in many voices, and beckon us with a thousand hands. 2. This declension may be accompanied by an inveterate hatred of theological heresy—"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." The head may be right while the heart is going in a wrong direction. I am indeed anxious that we

should maintain a Scriptural theology, that we should "hold fast the form of sound words"; at the same time we must remember that a technical theology will never save a soul; and that a mere verbal creed will never protect and increase our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. This declension evoked the most solemn warnings and exhortations. (1) The Church in its collective capacity may incur the Divine displeasure. There may be good individuals in the fellowship, yet the community as a whole may be under the frown of Him who "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." (2) The Church in its collective capacity must betake itself to repentance. This is evident when we remember that there is certain work properly denominated Church work. Take, for example, either home or foreign evangelisation. It is not my work solely as an individual to "go up and possess the land" of heathenism; but it is our work as a Church to carry the light of heaven into "the dark places of the earth." It can only be done by individuals, in so far as they are atoms in a fabric—parts of a whole. If, therefore, we have neglected to enter the door of opportunity as a Church, the cry of the angry Saviour is, "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly." (3) Jesus will unchurch every organisation that is unfaithful to His name; He threatens to "remove thy candlestick out of his place." Such language may well make us pause. Organisation is not spiritual brotherhood. Tell me not of gorgeous temples, of skilful arrangements, of complete machinery; I tell you that you may have all these in an unparalleled degree, and yet "Ichabod" may be written on your temple doors! What is your spiritual life? Is your ecclesiastical mechanism the expression of your love? III. THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH HAS THE RICHEST BLESSINGS IN RESERVE FOR ALL WHO OVERCOME THEIR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES. "Overcometh"—the word tells of battle and victory. There is intimation here of an enemy. There is a hell in this word, and in it there is a devil. That your spiritual life is a fight you need not be reminded: every day you are in the battle-field; you live by strife. "Eat"—the word tells of appetite. Desire is in this word, and desire satisfied. Our desire for more of God shall increase as the ages of our immortality expire, and yet increasing desire is but another way of saying increasing satisfaction. "The tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." It is but little we can say concerning such a tree: no worm is gnawing at its root, no serpent coils around its stem, no sere leaf trembles upon it as the prophet of a coming winter; its every leaf is jewelled with purer dew than ever sparkled on the eyelids of the morning. A tree! 'Tis but another word for beauty, for beauty walks forth in ever-varying manifestations. A tree! 'Tis but another name for progress, for the circling sap bears through every fibre life and fruitfulness. A tree! Shall we assemble around that central tree? We cannot do so until we have assembled around the Cross. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The words of Christ to the congregation at Ephesus*:—I. Those which concern HIMSELF. 1. His relation to the Church. 2. His knowledge of the Church. He knows not merely overt acts, but inner motives. II. Those which concern the CONGREGATION. 1. He credits them with the good they possess. (1) Their repugnance to wrong. (2) Their patience in toil. (3) Their insight into character. (4) Their hostility to error. 2. He reproves them for the declension they manifest. 3. He urges them to reform. III. Those which concern the DIVINE SPIRIT. 1. The Divine Spirit makes communication to all the Churches. 2. Proper attention to these communications requires a certain ear. IV. Those which concern MORAL CONQUERORS. 1. Life is a battle. 2. Life is a battle that may be won. 3. The winning of the battle is glorious. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Peculiarities of this Ephesian letter*:—I. OPPOSITION TO ERROR. 1. The origin of religious error is often involved in great obscurity. 2. The manifestation of religious error is in deeds as well as doctrines. There are those, alas! who are orthodox in doctrine, but corrupt in character. Why is this? (1) Because the sound doctrine remains in the head, and never enters the heart, and the heart is the spring of action. (2) Because sometimes the tempting spirit suddenly excites impulses which for a time bury the beliefs. 3. The defence of religious error is generally by an appeal to Divine authority. The men who set themselves up as "apostles" are more likely to be apostates. 4. The dissemination of religious error is often very rapid. (1) Because human nature in its depraved state has a greater affinity for it than for truth. (2) Because religious errorists are generally zealous propagandists. 5. The very existence of religious error should be hated by Christians. Nothing is more damning to the intellect, heart, soul. II. PATIENT ENDURANCE. It needed patience—1. Because it had to disseminate truth. The stupidity, prejudices, and indifferntism of men call for

this. 2. Because it has to encounter opposition. 3. Because patience is necessary to wait. The results of Christian labour are not reached at once, and are seldom so manifest as to compensate the labour expended. III. THE DECAY OF LOVE. 1. "Remember." Review the past, and call to mind the sweet, delicate, blooming affection of thy first love, with all the fresh joys and hopes it awakened. 2. "Repent." This does not mean crying, weeping, confessing, and throwing yourself into ecstasies, but a change in the spirit and purpose of life. 3. "Reproduce"—"do thy first work." Go over thy past life, reproduce the old feeling, and re-attempt old effort. 4. "Tremble." Let declension go on, and ruin is inevitable. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Phases of Church life; the Church declining in moral enthusiasm:*

—I. THAT THE CHURCH WHICH IS DECLINING IN MORAL ENTHUSIASM MAY BE CHARACTERISED BY MANY COMMENDABLE EXCELLENCES. 1. This Church was active in work. Ministerial and Church work ought to be labour—so earnest in its spirit and determined in its effort that it shall not be mere occupation, but a moral anxiety. 2. This Church was patient in suffering. The Church, in our own time, has great need of this virtue, to prayerfully await the culmination of all its purposes, when its victory shall be complete and its enthronement final. We have far too many impatient men in the Christian community who cannot bear reproach or impediment. 3. This Church was keen and true in moral sensibility. The world delights in calling the Church intolerant, how can it be otherwise of evil? It cannot smile upon moral wrong. 4. It was judicious in the selection of its officials. Who these false apostles were we cannot determine; suffice it to say that their credentials were examined and found defective. Such deceivers have existed in all ages of the Church, and have become the authors of innumerable heresies. Christians should always test the conduct and doctrine of those whose pretences are great, and who seek to obtain authority amongst them; as men will even lie in reference to the most sacred things of life, and as zeal is not the only qualification for moral service. 5. It was inspired by the name of Christ. His name is influential with the pious soul, because it is the source of all its good and hope. II. THAT THE CHURCH WHICH IS DECLINING IN MORAL ENTHUSIASM IS IN A MOST SERIOUS CONDITION, AND INVITES THE DIVINE REBUKE. 1. In what may the first love, or moral enthusiasm of the Church, be said to consist? It is, indeed, sad when the Church is beautiful in the face but cold at the heart. 2. What is it for a Church to decline in first love or moral enthusiasm? 3. What is it that occasions a decline in first love or moral enthusiasm? 4. What is it that Christ has against the Church which declines in first love or moral enthusiasm? He regards such a Church as neglectful of great privileges; as guilty of sad ingratitude; as inexcusable in its conduct; and earnestly calls upon it to repent and do its first works. III. THAT THE CHURCH DECLINING IN MORAL ENTHUSIASM MUST EARNESTLY SEEK THE RENEWAL OF ITS FERVOUR. 1. A Church in such a condition must have a vivid remembrance of its past glory. 2. A Church in such a condition must have deep contrition of soul. 3. A Church in such a condition must repeat the loving activities of its new and early life. IV. THAT THE CHURCH NEGLECTING TO REGAIN THE MORAL ENTHUSIASM OF ITS EARLY LIFE WILL MEET WITH TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION. 1. The retribution of such a Church will consist in the solemn visitation of Christ. It means affliction—it may be judgment. 2. The retribution of such a Church will consist in woful obliteration. V. THAT THE CHURCH DECLINING IN MORAL ENTHUSIASM SHOULD GIVE TIMELY HEED TO THE THREATENED RETRIBUTIONS OF GOD.

Lessons: 1. That the Church is surrounded by many hostile influences. 2. That the Church should, above all things, seek to retain its moral enthusiasm. 3. That the discipline of heaven toward the Church is for its moral welfare, but, if not attended to, will issue in great dejection. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) These things saith He who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.—*Christ's care in glory for His Church's good on earth:*—I. WHY IS THE CHURCH CALLED A CANDLESTICK? 1. A candlestick hath no light in it of itself, but light must be put into it: and therefore in the case of the candlestick under the law, to which this here is an allusion, the priests were to light the candles. 2. The use of a candlestick is for no other end than to hold up and hold out the light, and to this very end the Lord hath instituted Churches. 3. A candlestick is a thing movable, and with the removing of the candlestick you carry away the light; the Lord removes the candlestick from place to place; though the land remain, the Church is gone, that is a dangerous judgment: not only an immediate removing of the ordinances, but of the Church, for which all ordinances were appointed; the kingdom of God shall be taken from

them. 4. It is an allusion unto the candlestick under the law in the tabernacle, in Exod. xxv. 31, which was a type of the Church of God. II. WHY IS THE CHURCH CALLED A GOLDEN CANDLESTICK? 1. Because gold is the purest metal, and the Lord will have His Church such; they shall differ as much from other men as gold doth from the common clay in the streets. 2. Because gold of all metals is the most precious, and of the highest esteem; there is as much difference between the Church of God and other men as there is between gold and dirt in the street; as between diamonds and pebbles in the Lord's esteem. III. HOW IS CHRIST SAID TO WALK IN THE MIDST OF THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK? It denotes a promise of especial presence and fellowship; this is the promise that the Lord made unto the Jews (Lev. xxvi. 12). 1. There is a gracious presence of Christ with His Church in all Church administrations. 2. There is the great glory of God to be seen in heaven; and you shall find that there is a great resemblance between His presence in His Church and in glory (Heb. xii. 22, 23). (1) Christ in heaven is present in majesty and glory; it is called the throne of His glory, and such is His presence in His Church too, and therefore observe it, He is said to sit upon a high throne in the midst of His Churches (Rev. iv. 3). (2) In heaven the Lord is present as revealing His mind and will unto His people; there we shall know as we are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12), and so He is present in the midst of His people (Deut. xxxiii. 3). (3) In heaven there shall be a glorious and full communication of all grace; as your communion shall then be perfect with Him, so shall the communication of all His grace be to you. (4) In heaven the soul is wholly as it were resolved into God, that is, God wholly takes up the whole soul. (5) In heaven there is the presence of Christ among His saints and angels. Application: 1. How should this command reverence in every soul of you when you come to have to do with any Church administrations! 2. Is there such a gracious presence of Christ in Gospel administrations, labour to see it there, labour to have your souls affected with the spiritual presence or absence of Christ there. 3. Remember Christ is present, but He is present in holiness. 4. Take notice He is present in jealousy. (1) If you come at an adventure with God in Church administrations, the greatest temporal judgments shall be inflicted upon you (Ezek. x. 2). (2) If the Lord spare you in temporal judgments, He will pour out spiritual judgments. (*Wm. Strong.*) *The seven stars and the seven candlesticks*:—I. THE CHURCHES AND THEIR SERVANTS. I see in the relations between these men and the little communities to which they belonged, an example of what should be found existing between all congregations of faithful men and the officers whom they have chosen, be the form of their polity what it may. 1. The messengers are rulers. They are described in a double manner—by a name which expresses subordination, and by a figure which expresses authority. The higher are exalted that they may serve the lower. Dignity and authority mean liberty for more and more self-forgetting work. Power binds its possessor to toil. Wisdom is stored in one, that from him it may flow to the foolish; strength is given that by its holder feeble hands may be stayed. *Noblesse oblige.* The King Himself has obeyed the law. We are redeemed because He came to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. He is among us "as He that serveth." God Himself has obeyed the law. He is above all that He may bless all. He, the highest, stoops the most deeply. His dominion is built on love, and stands in giving. And that law which makes the throne of God the refuge of all the weak, and the treasury of all the poor, is given for our guidance in our humble measure. But to be servant of all does not mean to do the bidding of all. The service which imitates Christ is helpfulness, not subjection. Neither the Church is to lord it over the messenger nor the messenger over the Church. All alike are by love to serve one another; counting every possession, material, intellectual, and spiritual, as given for the general good. The one guiding principle is, "He that is chiefest among you, let him be your servant," and the other, which guards this from misconstruction and abuse from either side, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." 2. The messengers and the Churches have at bottom the same work to do. Stars shine, so do lamps. Light comes from both, in different fashion indeed, and of a different quality, but still both are lights. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for the same purpose,—to do good with. And we have all one office and function to be discharged by each in his own fashion—namely, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. 3. The Churches and their messengers are alike in their religious condition and character. The successive letters treat his strength or weakness, his fervour or coldness, his sin or victory

over evil, as being theirs. He represents them completely. Is it not true that the religious condition of a Church, and that of its leaders, teachers, pastors, ever tend to be the same, as that of the level of water in two connected vessels? Thank God for the many instances in which one glowing soul, all aflame with love of God, has sufficed to kindle a whole heap of dead matter, and send it leaping skyward in ruddy brightness! Alas! for the many instances in which the wet green wood has been too strong for the little spark, and has not only obstinately resisted, but has ignominiously quenched its ineffectual fire! II. THE CHURCHES AND THEIR WORK. 1. The Church is to be light. (1) "Light is light, which circulates." The substance which is lit cannot but shine; and if we have any real possession of the truth, we cannot but impart it; and if we have any real illumination from the Lord, who is the light, we cannot but give it forth. (2) Then think again how silent and gentle, though so mighty, is the action of the light. So should we live and work, clothing all our power in tenderness, doing our work in quietness, disturbing nothing but the darkness, and with silent increase of beneficent power filling and flooding the dark earth with healing beams. (3) Then think again that heaven's light itself invisible, and revealing all things, reveals not itself. The source you can see, but not the beams. So we are to shine, not showing ourselves but our master. 2. The Church's light is derived light. Two things are needed for the burning of a lamp: that it should be lit, and that it should be fed. In both respects the light with which we shine is derived. We are not suns, we are moons; reflected, not self-originated, is all our radiance. That is true in all senses of the figure; it is truest in the highest. In ourselves we are darkness, and only as we hold fellowship with Christ do we become capable of giving forth any rays of light. He is the source, we are but reservoirs. He the fountain, we only cisterns. He must walk amidst the candlesticks, or they will never shine. Their lamps had gone out, and their end was darkness. Oh! let us beware lest by any sloth and sin we choke the golden pipes through which there steals into our tiny lamps the soft flow of that Divine oil which alone can keep up the flame. 3. The Church's light is blended or clustered light. Union of heart, union of effort is commanded to us by this symbol of our text. The great law is, work together if you would work with strength. To separate ourselves from our brethren is to lose power. Why, half dead brands heaped close will kindle one another, and flame will sparkle beneath the film of white ashes on their edges. Fling them apart and they go out. Rake them together and they glow. III. THE CHURCHES AND THEIR LORD. He it is who holds the stars in His right hand, and walks among the candlesticks. The symbols are but the pictorial equivalent of His own parting promise, "Lo, I am with you always"! That presence is a plain literal fact, however feebly we lay hold of it. It is not to be watered down into a strong expression for the abiding influence of Christ's teaching or example, nor even to mean the constant benefits which flow to us from His work, nor the presence of His loving thoughts with us. The presence of Christ with His Church is analogous to the Divine presence in the material universe. As in it, the presence of God is the condition of all life; and if He were not here, there were no beings and no "here": so in the Church, Christ's presence constitutes and sustains it, and without Him it would cease. So St. Augustine says, "Where Christ, there the Church." For what purpose is He there with His Churches? The text assures us that it is to hold up and to bless. His unwearied hand sustains, His unceasing activity moves among them. But beyond these purposes, or rather included in them, the vision of which the text is the interpretation brings into great prominence the thought that He is with us to observe, to judge, and, if need be, to punish. Thank God for the chastising presence of Christ. He loves us too well not to smite us when we need it. He will not be so cruelly kind, so foolishly fond, as in any wise to suffer sin upon us. Better the eye of fire than the averted face. He loves us still, and has not cast us away from His presence. Nor let us forget how much of hope and encouragement lies in the examples, which these seven Churches afford, of His long-suffering patience. That presence was granted to them all, the best and the worst,—the decaying love of Ephesus, the licentious heresies of Pergamos and Thyatira, the all but total deadness of Sardis, and the self-satisfied indifference of Laodicea, concerning which even He could say nothing that was good. All had Him with them as really as the faithful Smyrna and the steadfast Philadelphia. We have no right to say with how much of theoretical error and practical sin the lingering presence of that patient pitying Lord may consist. For others our duty is the widest charity,—for ourselves the most careful watchfulness. For these seven

Churches teach us another lesson—the possibility of quenched lamps and ruined shrines. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christ's care over Churches and ministers*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY OUR LORD'S HOLDING THE STARS, HIS MINISTERS, IN HIS HAND. 1. It implies that it is He who appoints them to their office. 2. It is He who imparts the qualifications which are necessary for the effectual discharge of their office. 3. They are, with all their concerns, at His absolute disposal. II. THE IMPORT OF HIS WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS. 1. It imports an accurate impression of the state, both as a society and as individuals. 2. It implies that His business, so to speak, lies in the management of His Churches. It is His "building," His "husbandry." 3. It denotes the complacency He takes in them. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *Watchman, what of the night?*—The mention made of "stars" and "candlesticks" (or rather "lamp-stands") shows that it is night. It is the world's night; it is the Church's night. Day needs no lamps nor stars; night does both, for the outside earth and the inside chamber. I. WHO IS HE THAT THUS WALKETH? It is as Priest and King that He appears in the midst of His Churches: as such they are to acknowledge Him. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we see Him specially as Priest; in the Book of Revelation as King. II. WHERE DOES HE WALK? Among the seven golden candlesticks. III. WHAT DOES THIS WALKING MEAN? 1. He is near. A present Christ is specially taught us here—Jesus in the midst of His saints and His Churches. He is near to *all* of them, even the backsliding; as near to Laodicea and Sardis as to Ephesus and Philadelphia. 2. He watches over them. "I know thy works." His eye, the eye of the watchful Priest and King, the eye of the watchful Saviour and Shepherd, is upon them. He inspects them, oversees them, cares for them, values them, delights in them, takes an interest in their welfare. 3. He supplies their need. All His fulness is at hand for each of them. 4. He mourns over their sins. His holy eye detects the sin; His loving heart mourns over it. There is no anger, no fury here. All is gentleness and grace. 5. He cheers them with the promise of victory and recompense. As if He would say to each, "Fight on, for I am with you; faint not, for I, with all My fulness, am near. Shine on, for I delight in your brightness, and will enable you to shine. And My reward is with Me: to him that overcometh!" (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience.*—*False apostles*:—1. Christ would have us always walking in the sense of His Omniscience. 2. Christ is an unprejudged witness, as He taketh notice of their good as well as their evil. 3. Such as Christ never called, may take on them highest titles in the Church, as it seemeth these had who called themselves apostles. 4. That diligence in duty, and difficulty in the performance of it, often go together: to do and to bear are often joined. 5. Patience in suffering, and impatience against corruptions and corrupt men, can well stand together. 6. There is no name, privilege, or title that should scare people, especially the ministers of God, from searching or trying corrupt men, that bring corrupt doctrine, though they should have the pretext of apostles, and had never so great gifts. 7. If folks will put to proof many things and persons that have fair names, they will be found very unlike the names they take. 8. The censuring of corrupt unsent ministers is a most difficult task, what from their nature, and sometimes from their parts; what from the addictedness of many unto them, yet it is a special duty: yet that it is acceptable before Jesus Christ may appear from these considerations. (1) That the Scripture holdeth forth no kind of persons as more abominable in themselves and more hateful to Him (*Isa. lvi. 10*). (2) There is no kind of persons that prove more dishonourable to our Lord Jesus and to His gospel than such: these make the law to be despised. (3) The scandalous unfaithfulness of ministers brings a special blot upon all religion, as if it were but mere hypocrisy. (4) There is no such contempt done to our Lord Jesus, as for one to pretend to have commission from Him; and yet to be running unsent by Him; or, having gotten commission, to miscarry by unfaithfulness in it. (5) As there is a suitableness in the censuring of such Church-officers to Christ's mind, so there doth appear in the same a tenderness of and zeal unto His glory. Hence it is, that His most zealous servants, as Elias, Paul, did set themselves most against that generation. (6) There is no sort of men more hurtful to the Church. (7) Not only is there an obstruction to godliness by such, but they have a main influence upon the advancing of profanity. (*James Durham.*) *What Christ likes to see in a Church*:—1. Jesus likes to see a Church at work. He does not like to see a Church standing still, doing nothing to lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes. It is our duty to ask ourselves, Does our work as a Church come up to the standard of what a Christian Church ought to be? 2. He likes also

to see His people patient. He likes to see them labouring and not fainting, not becoming weary in well-doing. He likes to see them continuing instant in prayer, depending on Him to send the answer in His own good time. 3. Then, also, He likes to see within His Church a zeal for truth. "Thou canst not bear them which are evil." The dread of being thought narrow-minded, or of giving offence to the godless, makes the Church become far too tolerant of sin. No society of men is considered strict or narrow-minded if it has certain rules of membership, and if it expels those who violate its rules. Why should the Christian Church be afraid or ashamed to maintain a discipline which even the societies of the world will carry out? Let us try to imitate the Church of Ephesus in this—and let us not be afraid of the charge of intolerance in doing so—that we cannot bear them who are evil. (C. H. Irwin, M.A.) *Religion active*:—The new creature is not a marble statue or a transparent piece of crystal, which has purity but not life. It is a living spirit, and therefore active. (S. Charnock.) *Unwearied patience*:—Patience must not be an inch shorter than affliction. If the bridge reach but half way over the brook, we shall have but an ill-favoured passage. (T. Adams.) **And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.—The false apostle tried and discovered**:—What a dangerous and mischievous people false teachers and false apostles are. They do deceive men in the matter of their souls; they are called deceivers and seducers (John ii. 7; 2 Tim. iii. 13), and deceitful workers (2 Cor. xi. 13, 6). Now a man loves not to be deceived in anything, no, not in a small matter. If I had spent or given away much more, it would never have grieved me, you say; but I cannot endure to be cheated and deceived. And if a man cannot endure to be deceived in lesser things, what an evil thing is it then to be deceived in the matters of his soul? Such are the things that these false teachers do deceive men in; yea, they will and do subvert men's faith, and spoil them of the very fundamentals of their religion. Though they be a dangerous and mischievous people, yet it is an hard thing to discover them, for they walk in the dark, and transform themselves into ministers of light; they creep, and they privily creep into houses, saith the apostle; and they will come to you, saith our Saviour, in sheep's clothing (Matt. vii. 15). That is, look whatever garb the true prophet was or is found in, that will they be found in also. Did the true apostles preach Christ? so did the false apostles also (Phil. i. 15, 16). Did the true apostles and prophets declare the deep things of God? (1 Cor. ii. 10), so did the false prophets also (chap. ii. 24). Look what that is which the true preachers do, that will false teachers in appearance do. The same crow of iron, the same scripture that is in the hand of a friend, is made use of by a heretic, one that is a thief, who comes to make a prey of your faith. All teachers are to be tried three ways. By their call; their doctrine; their fruits or lives. And thus you see how those that are false apostles, or false teachers, may be tried and discovered. And is it a commendable thing in the eyes of Christ to make discovery of them? That it is the special work of Church officers to try and discover false teachers; for this epistle is directed to the angel of the Church of Ephesus. But though it is their work especially, yet it is a work incumbent upon all the saints and Churches. Therefore, yet more practically, go to God for wisdom and the spirit of discerning; it is Christ alone that doth see men's fruit under all their leaves: beg this discerning spirit, therefore, at the hands of Christ. Take heed that you do not lie in any sin or error, for all sin and error blinds. How shall you see the error of another, if you be blinded with your own sin and error? Be sure that you keep to the Scripture, and take heed that you do not judge of doctrines by impressions. Take heed that you have not too great a charity towards, and opinion of, those that are suspected to be false teachers. And if you would be sure to make up a right judgment in this great discovery, then stay your time, and wait long before you close with any of their opinions; for saith Christ, Ye shall know them by their fruit. Now the fruit of a tree is not presently seen; an ill tree in winter may seem to be as good as the best: stay therefore your time. (W. Bridge, M.A.) *Hatred of evil essential to love*:—This hate (of evil) is as essential to true love as shade to light, ever deepening with the intensity of it. (Isaac Williams.) **For My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.—Labouring and not fainting**:—I. THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE GOOD HERE COMBINED. 1. "Thou hast laboured." To labour means hard work, vigorous action. Men may work, but yet not labour, and I fear there are many who claim to be working men who do not often trouble themselves with anything approaching to "labour." There are also working Christians who do not approach to labouring; yet a lifetime of such work as theirs would not exhaust a butterfly. Now, when a man works for Christ

he should work with all his might. If any master is to be served badly, let it not be our Master who is in heaven; we owe Him too much to wish to be eyeservants towards Him. If anywhere a dilatory servant may be excused, certainly it cannot be in the service of Him who redeemed us with His most precious blood. If I may use the figure, we ought to employ every particle of our steam power: we should drive the engine at high pressure; we have no force that can be allowed to escape in waste. But labour implies not merely strong effort, but a continuance of it, for a man might take up a workman's tool and for a few minutes make a mighty show of effort, and yet be no labourer, unless he kept on working until his task was done. He merely plays at labour, that is all. So have we known too many whose service for God has been occasional; fits and starts of effort they have, but they are soon over; their spasmodic zeal is to-day so hot as to be well nigh fanatical, and to-morrow it will be succeeded by an indifference far more astounding. If the Church is said to labour, it means that she puts forth all her strength as a regular thing. Like the sun and moon she continues in her orbit of duty. She keeps at her life-work; with all her might she continues in well-doing, and is not weary. There is the positive good. 2. The negative crowns the positive—"And hast not fainted." Now, there are different degrees of fainting. Some may be said to faint comparatively when they flag in exertion. They drop from running to walking, from diligence to indolence. They did run well; what did hinder them? Many continue to do as much as ever they did outwardly, yet their heart is not in it, and so they faint. Some flag by growing weak in all they do. They do put forth such force as they have, but they are essentially feeble. The power of God has departed from them, and, though they may not know it, Ichabod is written upon their works. Too many go further than this; they renounce all or a large part of the Christian work they were accustomed to do. Content with the efforts of other days they surrender to the sluggard's vice. And some go even further than that, for after retiring from labour themselves, they cease to have any care about the Lord's work.

II. EXCUSES FOR FAINTING. 1. There are some who faint in the work of God because the work itself has proved very tedious to them. When they first undertook it and the novelty was upon it they did not tire, but now the freshness is gone, and they have come into the real wear and tear of it, they do not enjoy it quite so much as they thought they should. They hoped for an office in which the chief labour should be to gather lilies, or lie upon beds of roses. The service of the Crucified is far less romantic, and far more laborious. There is no royal road to eminence in anything, it is always uphill work and rough climbing; and certainly there is no such road in the service of God. 2. Other excuses, however, will be sure to come, and amongst them this, that we have been disappointed up till now in the success of what we have attempted. We have sown, but the most of the seed has fallen upon the wayside, or upon the rocks. We must not give up the war because we have not conquered yet, but fight on till we can seize the victory. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. 3. Another set of excuses I must mention. They are little, pettish, pitiful, proud excuses, but they are very common. Here is one. "I shall leave the work, for I am sure I am not appreciated as I ought to be." Do you mean to give way to such pettiness and silliness? If so, I have done with you, for you will never do any good in this world. The slave of such a mean feeling is incapable of being free. "Ah," cries another, "my complaint is more reasonable, for I am discouraged because no one aids me in my work." Oh, my brother, does your life after all depend upon the breath of other men's nostrils? Has it come to this, that you cannot live upon the approbation of your Master unless you gain also the smile of your fellow-servants? III. THE REAL CAUSES OF FAINTING. 1. The first is an actual decline in spiritual strength. It is not merely that you do not *do* so much, it is that you *are* not so much; you have not the amount of life in you which you once had. And is not this a sad thing? Oh, to be dead to these spiritual realities in any degree is a dreadful death, and to be callous to holy things is a terrible hardness. May God keep us from spiritual insensibility, and may we be sensitive to the faintest motion of the Holy Spirit. 2. It is to be feared, also, that those who faint have lost their reliance upon Divine power, at least in a degree. Confidence in God makes us strong, but by turning away from our great unseen Helper, we straightway begin to faint. 3. Moreover, I am afraid that we forget that the Lord requires of us an unselfish dedication to His service, and that we do not serve Him at all unless His glory is our chief object. You must feel that you would have the Lord use you just as in His infinite wisdom He sees fit to do. You should be a piece of iron on the Almighty's anvil: to be welded into a sceptre, if He chooses

with you to break the potter's vessels; to be beaten into a ploughshare and plunged into the earth, if by you He means to turn up the furrows of the fallow ground; or fashioned into a spear-point, if by you He intends to smite His enemies. IV. I have A LITTLE MEDICAL BUSINESS to do in closing. Four sorts of persons are very common among us. To each of these four I desire to administer a little medicine. 1. There are some who neither labour nor faint. 2. The next sort of persons to be dealt with are those who faint but do not labour. 3. Our third patient is one who did labour once, but has fainted. 4. But there are some who labour and are ready to faint. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Endurance :—To lift up some heavy weight from the ground argues some strength; but to carry it for an hour, or all day, is a more perfect thing. (*Thomas Manton.*)

Thou hast left thy first love.—*Inward deterioration* :—Does it not often happen in the Christian life that the soul retains earnestness, patience, truth, endurance, a hatred of evil, long after it has left its first love; that its religious service is continued, apparently unaltered, while the spirit that prompted that service is changed for the worse? But though love is altered, there may yet remain the sense of duty. None without can detect the difference. The soul itself is perhaps hardly conscious of it. Or if conscious of anything, it is that prayer is not so easy and pleasant as it used to be, that the thoughts are more wandering, that temptation is more attractive, and thanksgiving is irksome, unreal, and unbled. The whole tendency of our being is to deteriorate. Most of us can remember a time at which we think we were more fit to die than we are now. Our self-examination has told us that we are not now what we were; and perhaps self-examination was hardly necessary for the acquirement of this knowledge. It is forced upon us continually throughout the day as we feel and act so coldly towards good, so readily and kindly towards evil. Now if it be really that we have fallen back only one step in faith and love, if we have left our first love, what must we do? We must struggle against the languor which threatens to benumb us. We must struggle with all our might, not giving up any one duty merely because it is irksome. This may not indeed be restoration, but it will at least maintain that communication with the Source of all strength by which restoration may be looked for. When we have realised what we once were, and reflect that by God's grace we might have lived the rest of our lives according to that beginning, and neared the goal in the heavenward race, then we may be able to measure our decline, and, weeping over what we have lost, pray for grace to regain it. "And repent." Yes! this must be. We will not trust in that which remains, in our hatred of the worst sins, in sympathy with Him, not in our works, or our labour, or our patience, our distrust of false teachers, our perseverance under trial. These are nothing without love. We will confess that other lords besides Him have had dominion over us. We will confess that we have left our first love, and implore Him to recover us, and turn our hearts. (*W. Mitchell, M.A.*)

The enthusiasm of the first love :—I. WHAT IS IT? Most of us can probably remember an early enthusiastic preference or affection for some one. It was like nothing else in our lives. It stirred in us as the spring stirs in the earth when the green shoots appear. New capacities of working, enjoying, suffering, began to reveal themselves. Now, the same thing happens when Christ and His love are first revealed to us, and we rise up and meet them. It is an absolutely new experience. We feel an intense interest and a strong drawing of the heart. Spiritual things which seemed far off have suddenly come near. Life has become of meaning and value, not so much for what it brings to us, as for what it is; because it has become so full of love and of God. And we feel within us the working of a new passion—a yearning to do good, to sacrifice ourselves in some way, to make some return to that wonderful Divine love which seems to surround us like an atmosphere and lift us like an inspiration. It is so easy to do right; it seems shameful, almost impossible, to do wrong; we could not be so disloyal as to think of any forbidden thing, and a keen remorse seizes us if we appear to swerve by a hairbreadth from the straight path. In this first love, where vividly experienced, there are these three elements—an awakening, an enthusiasm, and a jealous preference. We realise God; we realise life; we realise the claims of men, the beauty of goodness, the baseness of sin, the triumphant power of righteousness, and the wide, deep meaning of eternity. But this love is not mere contemplation. We are eager to act in the light of this revelation, because all these beliefs are full of conviction and impulse, and we must do something for the Christ who has made all things new—who has given us a possession in all things, and, above all, a possession in Himself. That is the enthusiasm of the first love. But love is not love unless it is jealous—jealous not in a mean, but in a high sense—jealous of

any interference with its course. Nothing can be tolerated which takes the edge off the soul, that keen edge which ensures success in work and conflict and prayer. II. LOSING IT, OR RATHER LEAVING IT. Sometimes a man looks back on the first love he felt to Christ with philosophic indifference: "Yes, I was rather interested in these things at one time—enthusiastic even after a fashion. Very curious, you know, how the mind works; I can scarcely credit it now. Oh, one of those passing phases of feeling, of course." Sometimes a man looks back to it scoffingly or contemptuously: "I believe I did once rather make a fool of myself about religion. I have got more important things now to attend to." Others assume a tone of self-congratulation. They narrate how they threw themselves into this piece of work or that; how there was nothing they would not do. A man plumes himself on the fact that, though, of course, he would never think of making sacrifices and exerting himself in Christ's cause now, that at one time he was just as active and self-denying as any ardent young Christian. Others I have known look back despairingly: "Yes, I once had these experiences you speak of—hopes bright beyond expression, and feelings fresh as the dawn. But the light is gone; the tide has ebbed, and won't flow again. I would that these feelings could come back, but we don't look for miracles nowadays." That is what some people say despairingly. Now the ways by which men generally forfeit their best spiritual possession are mainly these: Failure to feed it. All love is hungry, and the finer and purer a love is, the more it demands suitable nutriment. If your first love shows signs of failing, ask yourself, "Am I not starving it?" You are starving it if you are not seeking Christ as you sought Him at first, asking Him to reveal Himself to you; setting apart "still hours"; letting your heart go out to the only object to whom it is quite worth while for our hearts to cling. Or again, perhaps you are failing to develop your first love—to give it exercise. What sacrifices is your love making? what is it bringing to the Divine loved one's feet? Once more, you may be forfeiting your first love through failure to guard it. There is a keen spiritual edge with which all the best part of spiritual work is done. We must whet the edge; but we must also sheathe it. In contact with certain things it gets blunt. III. KEEPING FIRST LOVE. There are two theories about love that are thoroughly false—the theory of disenchantment and the theory of emotional exhaustion. Sometimes we are told that all love in its very nature is illusion; that our enthusiasm for a person or cause is very largely a creation of our own fond imagination; and that the cold touch of reality slowly dispels all that sort of thing. This is the philosophy of the cynics, and cynics are a set of fools, blinded by the conceit of their own superior wisdom. Of course there is excuse for disenchantment when the object of our affection changes, or when we have been deceived in it. But that cannot happen here; Christ does not change. And then as to what may be called emotional exhaustion. Love necessarily exhausting itself! what ignorant nonsense! Why, love grows by what it feeds on. And to love Christ is to keep near the fresh fount of all love. It is not an emptying of our full hearts; it is a filling of our empty hearts. Of course the Divine love—the first love—is not stereotyped. It does not retain always the same complexion or the same expressions, but it retains, or ought to retain, the same intensity. All love passes through phases, and develops not by standing still, but by moving forward. It is not meant that our first love to Christ should retain its juvenile form. But it is meant that it should retain its ardour, its capacity of sacrifice, and its jealous watchfulness. (*John F. Ewing, M.A.*) *The peculiarities of the Christian's first love*:—The prominent characteristic of every soul truly converted to Christianity is love to the Saviour. The faith which is the gift of God, and which is wrought in Christians by the Holy Spirit, always works by love. Love is, therefore, set down as the first and principal fruit of the Spirit. Now, there is something peculiar in the exercise of this first love of the young convert. 1. Its exercise is fervent and tender, not founded, indeed, on such accurate views of the character of Christ as are afterwards acquired; and commonly less pure from mere animal excitement, than that of the mature Christian, but accompanied with more joy and exultation. 2. Another thing which stamps a peculiarity on the first love of the Christian is the novelty of the objects and scenes which are now presented to his enlightened mind. All his lifetime he has been in darkness respecting the true nature of spiritual things. But now the eyes of his understanding being opened, and the true light shining into them, everything appears new and attractive; and sometimes a Divine glory is exhibited to the contemplation of the enlightened mind. 3. Again, God deals with His children in the infancy of their spiritual life as mothers with their children while they are young. They furnish them with the sweetest

nutriment, cherish them in their bosoms, carry them in their arms, and rock them in the cradle. But when they have been weaned, and have grown strong, they are turned out to shift for themselves. Thus, our heavenly Father, who exercises a warmer and tenderer affection for His children than the kindest mothers, is pleased to deal very tenderly with young converts; and often pours streams of Divine comfort into their susceptible hearts. They are for a season led in smooth and pleasant paths. In their prayers and other religious exercises they enjoy liberty of access to their heavenly Father. These are indeed halcyon days, and will be often afterwards remembered with a mournful pleasure, when the scene is greatly changed; and especially when inbred corruption grows strong. The early days of the true Christian may also be well illustrated by the feelings of the newly enlisted soldier. He rejoices in the "pomp and circumstance" of the military life; is animated by the sound of martial music, and by the sight of splendid banners, and the gorgeous costume of his officers. But how different are the condition and feelings of the same person when he receives marching orders; and especially when he is led into battle. (*A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Spiritual declension reproved, admonished, and threatened*.—I. A REPROOF. Who does not lament to see an exquisite piece of workmanship marred by some one defect; for in this case, the neighbourhood and prominence of the excellency renders the fault more obvious, and more offensive. Everything in the Divine life is prone to degenerate. Where is the denomination or church that has long remained in its glory? But the reproof is addressed to individuals. There were those who had fallen, and the charge is—dereliction of their first love. Now in Christianity provision is made not only for a believer's perseverance in the ways of God, but for his growth and progress. "Add to your faith, virtue," &c. And as the Saviour demands this, so you must acknowledge that He deserves it; and why, do you love Him the less and serve Him less. "What," says he, "have you been mistaken in my character, have I injured you; have I not been increasing my claims upon you; and while I am doing more for you, are you doing less for me?" II. AN ADMONITION. 1. "Remember." All religion commences in serious thought. There is nothing more useful than self-recollection; there is no means better for reviving the soul than a review of former experiences. 2. "Repent." This is enjoined in Scripture not only on sinners, but also on saints; and they will be the subjects of it as long as they remain in the world, as long as the performance of duty has deficiency in it. 3. Renewed obedience, "do the first works"; begin again, be as simple, as earnest, as patient, as circumspect, as at first. How mortifying would be such a requisition to an Israelite in the wilderness, to be turned back to walk over all his journey again;—how mortifying to an apprentice, after being for years engaged in business, expecting to get forward, to be put back to his first work, and to have the first rough implements put into his hands again;—how mortifying to a scholar when hoping to be dismissed from his studies, and to return home, to be led back from class to class, and have the first elementary book again put into his hands. III. A THREATENING. 1. How are we to understand this threatening? how is it to be accomplished? It is accomplished when men fall into such languor and insensibility in Divine things as to be incapable of edification. If a man cannot use aliment, or if he cannot digest it, it is the same as if it was taken away, for he will surely die; and such is the condition of thousands who, from week to week, hear the gospel; it makes no impression, they hear it, but they are sermon proof, heaven proof, and hell proof. The gospel is to them of no avail whatever. 2. The dreadfulness of this state. If God were from this hour to declare that the sun should never rise again on this country, or that no rain should ever again drop upon the land, it would be an infinitely less judgment, than if he were to withdraw the gospel and the means of grace; for this judgment does not so much regard the body as the soul; or time so much as eternity. Some judgments are corrective, but this is penal. Some judgments are meant to convert, but this to destroy. 3. The certainty of this threatening. We are slow to believe. How superficial our belief is in this respect appears from the unsteadiness of our Christian practice. Surely if we believed we should be established; but when you hear such language as this, you are prone to suppose it never can be realised. It will be necessary for me, therefore, to inform you, that he who has denounced this threatening is faithful. "God is not a man that He should lie, or the Son of Man that He should repent." (*W. Jay, M.A.*) *On leaving our first love*:—I. A CHARGE PREFERRED. "Thou hast left thy first love." 1. What is meant by the first love? Ask the young convert, who, after having received the sentence of death in his conscience; after trembling under the curse of a

broken law; after struggling in the bondage of darkness, doubt, and fear, has come forth under the leading of the Spirit, into the light, liberty, and joy of the gospel! 2. What then is it to leave this happy state? It is to let the heart grow cold and indifferent to Him whom we can never love enough! It is to lose the sweet enjoyment of privileges, and consider duty wearisome. It is to have services formal and ordinances barren. It is to have idols in the temple of the soul, so that the whole is not, as it ought to be, consecrated to the Lord. II. WE HAVE AN ADMONITION GIVEN. 1. This admonition relates to the past. The Lord here calls the Ephesian Church to bring their past experience and character to mind. They had fallen. They had been once much higher in Christian standing than now. Their minds had been more elevated in holy and heavenly conceptions, and their practice more dignified and honourable. Then, leaving our first love to Christ is falling. Now, this is a state just the reverse of what a Christian's state ought to be. 2. This admonition relates to the present. "Repent!" seeing by a review of the past, to what danger the soul has been exposed; what guilt has been contracted; what honour and enjoyments have been lost; what injury has been done to religion; what injustice to Christ, the work of reformation must immediately begin. 3. This admonition relates to the future. "And do thy first works." All will be vain and unreal without this. There must be fruits meet for repentance, to prove it genuine. III. A THREATENING DENOUNCED. Lessons: 1. It is possible for there to be many things commendable in Christians, and yet something to call for a solemn threatening, like that in our text. 2. It is evident that leaving our first love is very criminal in the sight of Christ. 3. The removal of the gospel from souls in any way is a most awful punishment. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Love's complaining:*—I. CHRIST PERCEIVES. 1. He does not so perceive the faults as to be forgetful of that which He can admire and accept. He has a keen eye for all that is good. When He searches our hearts He never passes by the faintest longing, or desire, or faith, or love, of any of His people. He says, "I know thy works." 2. But this is our point, that while Jesus can see all that is good, yet in very faithfulness He sees all that is evil. His love is not blind. It is more necessary for us that we should make a discovery of our faults than of our virtues. 3. This evil was a very serious one; it was love declining. It is the most serious ill of all; for the Church is the bride of Christ, and for a bride to fail in love is to fail in all things. 4. It was Jesus Himself who found it out. How good of Him to care one jot about our love! This is no complaint of an enemy, but of a wounded friend. 5. Jesus found it out with great pain. 6. The Saviour, having thus seen this with pain, now points it out. 7. The Saviour pointed out the failure of love; and when He pointed it out He called it by a lamentable name. "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen." 8. The Master evidently counts this decline of love to be a personal wrong done to Himself. "I have somewhat against thee." It is an offence against the very heart of Christ. II. WHAT THE SAVIOUR PRESCRIBES. 1. The first word is Remember. "Thou hast left thy first love." Remember, then, what thy first love was, and compare thy present condition with it. At first nothing diverted thee from thy Lord. He was thy life, thy love, thy joy. Remember from whence thou art fallen. Remember the vows, the tears, the communings, the happy raptures of those days; remember and compare with them thy present state. Remember and consider, that when thou wast in thy first love, that love was none too warm. Even then, when thou didst live to Him, and for Him, and with Him, thou wast none too holy, none too consecrated, none too zealous. Remember the past with sad forebodings of the future. He who has sunk so far may fall much farther. 2. The next word of the prescription is "Repent." Repent as thou didst at first. Repent of the wrong thou hast done thy Lord. 3. But then he says in effect, Return. The third word is this—"Repent, and do the first works." There must be in every declining Christian a practical repentance. Do not be satisfied with regrets and resolves. III. HE PERSUADES. 1. With a warning. "I will come unto thee," &c. Our Lord means, first, I will take away the comfort of the Word. But the candlestick also symbolises usefulness: it is that by which a Church shines. The use of a Church is to preserve the truth, wherewith to illuminate the neighbourhood, to illuminate the world. God can soon cut short our usefulness, and He will do so if we cut short our love. 2. With a promise. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Observe, those who lose their first love fall, but those who abide in love are made to stand. In contrast to the fall which took place in the paradise of God, we have man eating of the tree of life, and so living for ever. If

we, through grace, overcome the common tendency to decline in love, then shall we be confirmed in the favour of the Lord. Note again, those who lose their first love wander far; they depart from God. "But," saith the Lord, "if you keep your first love you shall not wander, but you shall come into closer fellowship. I will bring you nearer to the centre. I will bring you to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The inner ring is for those who grow in love; the centre of all joy is only to be reached by much love. Then notice the mystical blessing which lies here, waiting your meditation. Do you know how we fell? The woman took of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and gave to Adam; and Adam ate and fell. The reverse is the case in the promise before us: the Second Adam takes of the Divine fruit from the tree of promise, and hands it to His spouse; she eats and lives for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Forsaking the first love*:—I. THE GREATNESS OF THE SIN OF COLDNESS IN CHRISTIANS, AND HOW OFFENSIVE IT IS TO GOD. 1. You have no right to feel this indifference towards God or man. 2. This coldness is not a mere defect, it bespeaks some degree of the positive action of the most polluting passions. 3. It is a dreadful abuse of God. It is passing by His infinite glories after other objects. 4. It involves all the guilt of base ingratitude. 5. There is in this thing the violation of an oath, or a solemn breach of covenant.

II. WHAT IS TO BE DONE, AND HOW WE ARE TO ESCAPE FROM THIS FEARFUL CONDITION. (*E. Griffin, D.D.*) *Backsliding*:—I. ITS NATURE. 1. Some backslide in heart. This consists in the withdrawal of the affections from God. 2. Some backslide in life. When a person becomes careless of God in his heart, he will probably soon manifest the defect in his conduct. 3. There are others who backslide in doctrinal sentiment. II. ITS SYMPTOMS. 1. Love of the world. 2. A cold formal spirit in the exercises of devotion. 3. When the heart has lost all delight in spiritual things, we have another evidence of being in a backsliding state. 4. Association with men of the world is another evidence of a backsliding state. By this we mean, all that association which is uncalled for by the business or relationships of life. 5. A state of backsliding is testified by negligence in attending the means of grace. III. ITS EVILS. 1. It dishonours God. 2. It deprives us of happiness. The pleasures of religion are suspended where there is inconsistency of conduct, and where the spirit of the world reigns. 3. It gives our enemies advantage over us. 4. It prepares us for terrible darkness in a dying hour. IV. ITS CURE. We must take heed of that disposition which would lead us to suppose that the case is incurable. This is the greatest obstacle in the way of recovery. We must remember that against such reasoning the testimony of the word of God is directed. The facts of Scripture prove it. David, Peter, and others fell far from God; and they verified the word, "tho' a just man fall seven times, he shall rise again." 1. Come back with fervent prayer. 2. If we would have this state rectified, we must begin where we began at first: we must repent and do our first works. And in doing this, let us be sure that we rest on the right foundation. 3. We must call to mind former days, and compare them with the present. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Declension from first love*:—I. WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE? Oh, let us go back—it is not many years with some of us. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history. Oh, what love was that which I had to my Saviour the first time He forgave my sins. I could realise then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen—"O my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and Thee, if I could not get at Thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice, but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace Thee and call Thee mine." Now it is that first love that you and I must confess, I am afraid, we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Saviour how earnest we were; there was not a single thing in the Bible that we did not think most precious; there was not one command of His that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver. That first love does not last half so long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here; you have not that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it, which is, after all, the love to be most desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect. Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you—you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side; and how often do you dally with the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ! Again, how happy you used to be in the ways of God. There was a time when every bitter

thing was sweet; whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater change in you than there has been in him. Again, when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ? Now, how little will we do. II. WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Have you not lost your first love in the world, some of you? Is it not marvellous, that when you grew richer and had more business, you began to have less grace? It is a very serious thing to grow rich. Dost thou not think, again, that thou hast lost thy first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ, but not to live a great deal with Christ? Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often, that you have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said, that if "all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets, and led us to neglect prayer, better for us never to have heard their names, than to have gone to listen to them." We shall never love Christ much except we live near to Him. III. SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Loss of the first love:*—I have often been constrained to notice that when Christians, from time to time, throw themselves into actual labour for the Lord, there is a great danger of a reaction coming, a consciousness of weariness: they begin to grow "weary of well doing"; perhaps there are a few disappointments; the work is not going on so flourishingly. When the wind and tide are in our favour, there are some of us who can work very hard; we can pull a very lusty oar as long as the boat seems to make progress, but when we find the tide dead against us, and it seems as though we were making no headway, we begin to feel faint, and weary, and ask somebody to take the oar. That is a dangerous snare. Can we honestly and truthfully say that we are workers, that we are labourers, and that we are patient labourers, so plodding that we have "not fainted" in spite of all the difficulties with which we have been surrounded? Is there anything more that could be said in their favour? Yes, something still. These Ephesian converts had held to God's truth in a day when there was a good deal of theological discussion, and also theological misconception and error. They were "orthodox to the backbone"; our Lord had no fault to find with them in this respect; they "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes," they would have nothing to do with them. How happy were these men! the Word of God, how they loved to pore over it! what treasures they found in it! It was a joy to them to open the sacred page. "But," you say, "I suppose Christian experience will not always be identical": and, certainly, it is not. Well then, when we have first passed out of darkness into light, it is natural that there should be a good deal of emotion in our experience, and much of this may reasonably be expected to pass away as we become more established Christians. Now there may be a great deal of truth in all this, and yet such pleading may indicate but too surely "the loss of the first love." Our experience is subject to change. But how is it to change? I wonder whether St. Paul loved his Master less, or more, when he said towards the end of his life, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," than he did at the moment when he first committed his soul into His hands. Do you suppose it is a sign of ripening experience to substitute work, energy, and a thousand other things for "love." Oh, let us not delude ourselves. There is one thing more important than "work," yes, more important than "labour," even more important than orthodoxy, and that one thing is Jesus Christ *Himself*. If we have got Him we shall have all the rest, and if we have got the rest and have not got Him, we have nothing. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." How do people "lose their first love"? We think, as we first experience it, that it is so delightful in itself, there is so much of heaven upon earth in such experience, that we must be worse than mad ever to forfeit it. Now do not suppose that anybody throws it away wilfully." It is little by little that "the first love" is lost. 1. Many people "lose" it by earthly business. They lead bustling lives; they have so many cares pressing upon them, so much to think about, so much to be undertaken. It is even so with some of our Christian workers. Or, perhaps, in our worldly employment, we are bent upon certain objects which are out of harmony with the will of Christ. There is some dark form of worldly care, or it may be of religious activity—something or other has crept in between us and God, and the whole heaven is darkened, the light is eclipsed, and the blessedness is gone. 2. Or, again, there are many Christians who "lose their first love" by forming another love. Thou art forfeiting that

blessed inner life of love, which can only be realised by those who understand the full force of the first great commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." 3. Yet again, how many of us "lose our first love" by little acts of thoughtlessness. Love is a very jealous thing. (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) *Spiritual declension* :—I. ITS SYMPTOMS : The first test, to which we would bring the professing Christian who is anxious to determine whether love is growing cold in himself, is that furnished by secret prayer and the study of God's Word. Prayer has been not inaptly called the breathing of the soul; and you may be sure, that where this grows shorter and more difficult, there can be no healthful play in the organs of life. And as one great symptom of spiritual decline may be derived from the more private means of grace, so may another from the more public. The Christian in whom vital religion is in a healthy condition, attaches great worth to the public ordinances; neglect of these is, however, a sign of declining love. But now take another symptom—equally decisive, though perhaps more easily overlooked. There is no feeling stronger in the Christian than that of desire to promote God's glory in the salvation of his fellow-men. But suppose him to become comparatively indifferent to the diffusion of the gospel—so that it is not with the heart, though it may be with the purse and the hand, that he helps forward the cause of the Redeemer; ah! who will say that the love is not losing its fervour? who will deny the spiritual decline? But again; there is a broad separating line between the men of the world and the men of religion. And the healthful Christian is quite aware of this. He guards accordingly with godly jealousy against any such conformity as would do violence to his profession. But there may be—and there often is—a great change in these respects. The man of religion comes to view the world with less fear, and less repugnance. Alas! this is one of the strongest of symptoms that the fervour is departing from the love. And not unlike the symptom of making light of the difference between religion and the world is that of making light of the difference between various creeds. The distinguishing doctrines of the gospel are prized by the ardent Christian as treasures without which he were unutterably poor. Hence he looks with abhorrence, for example, on Socinianism; it would strip Christ of His Divinity, and this he feels would be the stripping himself of immortality. But this repugnance to error may not continue. And wheresoever there is this lowered sense of the indispensableness of fundamental truths, and of an increasing disposition to think gently of wrong systems of religion, you may be sure that the love is fast losing its fervour. You may be certain, further, that where there is no increase in religion there must be some radical deficiency; nay, where there is no increase there must be a decrease. Judge then yourselves, ye who would know whether ye are the subjects of spiritual declension. Is it a greater privilege to you to pray, and a less labour to be obedient? Have you a firmer command over your passions? Is the will more in harmony with the Divine? Is the conscience more sensitive, and is the judgment prompter in deciding for what is right against what is agreeable? II. ITS DANGERS. For some of you might be disposed to say—"Well, what if our love be less ardent than it was? it does not follow that we must be in great peril; the love may be warm enough for salvation, and yet not as warm as it was at first." But if you remember how our Lord reasoned in regard of "the salt which had lost its saltiness"—and this is but another figure to express the same thing as the love losing its fervour. The grand difficulty is not that of producing love at first, but of restoring its heat when it has been suffered to grow cold. Even amongst ourselves, in reference to human attachment, the difficulty of rousing a decayed affection is almost proverbial. The party who has loved and then ceased to love, is of all others the least likely to love again. The ashes of the decayed sentiment seem to smother the fresh sparks. And the difficulty which is experienced in the revival of human affection might be looked for, when it is the love of God and of Christ which has grown languid. You are to observe, that a great deal must have been done for the man in whom the love of God has once been kindled. The Spirit of God must have striven with this man—so as to arouse in him the dormant immortality, and brought him to experience the power of the gospel. But it is not the course of this celestial Agent, to persist in working where there is no earnestness in holding fast what He has already granted. If you expose yourselves to the damps of the world or unnecessarily permit the icy winds of temptation to beat upon you, He will work on you with less and less energy or communicate less and less of animating grace. And we cannot but suppose, that this Spirit is more displeased when neglected by one on whom He has effectually wrought, than when resisted by another with whom He has striven in vain. But the

Spirit may be recalled; and then the smothered flame may be rekindled. We will not deny it; God forbid that we should. We are not required to make the case out hopeless, but only full of difficulty. Take away the life from religion, leave us nothing but formality, and there is not upon the face of the earth an individual, so useless to others and to himself, as the one in whom the love remains, but remains in its ashes and not in its fires. It is the insidiousness of the disease which makes it so difficult to cope with. The resemblance is continually fixed on us, between what our medical men call consumption, and what our theological call spiritual decline. You know very well, that the presence of consumption is often scarcely suspected till the patient is indeed past recovery. There is perhaps no disease which less tells its victim what its fatal errand is. You know how beautifully brilliant it often makes the eye and the cheek. Alas! this is but emblematic of what it does to the heart, flushing it with hope and suffusing it with life, when the winding sheet is woven and the shadow is falling. But this disease, so insidious, so flattering, so fatal, is the exact picture of spiritual decline. Ministers and kinsmen may perceive no difference in the man; equally regular in the public duties of religion, equally large in his charities, equally honourable in his dealings, equally pure in his morals. The fatal symptoms may be all internal; and because they are not such as to draw observation, there may be no warning given by others; and the sick man, not examining himself, and not finding that his religious friends suppose him to be on the decline, will be all the more likely to feel persuaded of his safety, and to learn his disease, alas! only from his death. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *The true problem of Christian experience:—I. THE RELATION OF THE FIRST LOVE, OR THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP, TO THE SUBSEQUENT LIFE.*—What we call conversion is not a change distinctly traceable in the experience of all disciples, though it is and must be a realised fact in all. There are many that grew up out of their infancy, or childhood, in the grace of Christ, and remember no time when they began to love Him. Even such, however, will commonly remember a time when their love to God and Divine things became a fact so fresh, so newly conscious, as to raise a doubt whether it was not then for the first time kindled. In other cases there is no doubt of a beginning—a real, conscious, definitely-remembered beginning—a new turning to God, a fresh-born Christian love. It is now realised, as far as it can be—the very citizenship of the soul is changed; it has gone over into a new world, and is entered there into new relations. But it has not made acquaintance there; it scarcely knows how it came in, or how to stay, and the whole problem of the life-struggle is to become established in what has before been initiated. What was initiated as feeling must be matured by holy application, till it becomes one of the soul's own habits. A mere glance at the new-born state of love discovers how incomplete and unreliable it is. Regarded in the mere form of feeling, it is all beauty and life. A halo of innocence rests upon it, and it seems a fresh made creature, reeking in the dews of its first morning. But how strange a creature is it to itself—waking to the discovery of its existence, bewildered by the mystery of existence. An angel, as it were, in feeling, it is yet a child in self-understanding. The sacred and pure feeling you may plainly see is envired by all manner of defects, weaknesses, and half-conquered mischiefs, just ready to roll back upon it and stifle its life. It certainly would not be strange if the disciple, beset by so many defects, and so little ripe in his experience, should seem for a while to lose ground, even while strenuously careful to maintain his fidelity. And then Christ will have somewhat against him. He will not judge him harshly, and charge it against him as a crime that has no mitigations; it will only be a fatal impeachment of his discipleship, when he finally surrenders the struggle, and relapses into a prayerless and worldly life. II. *THE SUBSEQUENT LIFE, AS RELATED TO THE BEGINNING, OR FIRST LOVE.* The paradise of first love is a germ, we may conceive, in the soul's feeling of the paradise to be fulfilled in its wisdom. And when the heavenly in feeling becomes the heavenly in choice, thought, judgment, and habit, so that the whole nature consents and rests in it as a known state, then it is fulfilled or completed. At first the disciple knows, we shall see, very little of himself, and still less how to carry himself so as to meet the new state of Divine consciousness into which he is born. At first nothing co-operates in settled harmony with his new life, but if he is faithful, he will learn how to make everything in him work with it, and assist the edifying of his soul in love. A very great point to be gained, by the struggle of experience, is to learn when one has a right to the state of confidence and rest. At first the disciple measures himself wholly by his feeling. If feeling changes, as it will and must at times, then he con-

demns himself, and condemning himself perhaps without reason, he breaks his confidence towards God and stifles his peace. Then he is ready to die to get back his confidence, but not knowing how he lost it, he knows not where to find it. But finally, after battering down his own confidence and stifling his love in this manner by self-discouragement for many years, he is corrected by God's Spirit and led into a discovery of himself and the world that is more just, ceases to condemn himself in that which he alloweth, so to allow himself in anything which he condemneth; and now behold what a morning it is for his love! His perturbed, anxious state is gone. God's smile is always upon him: first love returns, henceforth to abide and never depart. Everywhere it goes with him, into all the callings of industry and business, into social pleasures and recreations, bathing his soul as a divine element. By a similar process he learns how to modulate and operate his will. On one side his soul was in the Divine love. On the other he had his will. But, how to work his will so as perfectly to suit his love, he at first did not know. He accordingly took his love into the care of his will; for assuredly he must do all that is possible to keep it alive. He thus deranged all right order and health within by his violent superintendence, battered down the joy he wished to keep, and could not understand what he should do more; for, as yet, all he had done seemed to be killing his love. He had not learned that love flows down only from God, who is its object, and cannot be manufactured within ourselves. But he discovers finally that it was first kindled by losing, for the time, his will. Understanding now that he is to lose his will in God's will, and abandon himself wholly to God, to rest in Him and receive of His fulness; finding, too, that will is only a form of self-seeking, he makes a total loss of will, self, and all his sufficiency; whereupon the first love floods his nature again, and bathes him like a sea without a shore. And yet it will not be strange if he finds, within a year, that, as he once overacted his will in self-conduct, so now he is underacting it in quietism; that his love grows thin for want of energy, and, returning to his will again, he takes it up in God; dares to have plans and ends, and to be a person; wrestles with God and prevails with Him; and so becomes, at last, a prince, acknowledged and crowned before Him. At first he had a very perplexing war with his motives. He feared that his motive was selfish, and then he feared that his fear was selfish. He dug at himself so intently, to detect his selfishness, as to create the selfishness he feared. The complications of his heart were infinite, and he became confused in his attempt to untwist them. He blamed His love to God because he loved Him for His goodness, and then tried to love Him more without any thought of His goodness. He was so curious, in fact, to know his motives that he knew nothing of them; and finally stifled his love in the effort to understand it, and act the critic over it. At length, after months or years, it may be, of desolation, he discovers, as he had never done before, that he was a child in his first love, and had a child's simplicity. And now he has learned simplicity by his trial! Falling now into that first simplicity, there to abide, because he knows it, the first love blooms again—blooms as a flower, let us hope, that is never to wither. His motive is pure because it is simple; and his eye, being single toward God, his whole body is full of light. You perceive, in this review, how everything in the subsequent life of the disciple is designed of God to fulfil the first love. A great part of the struggle which we call experience, appears to operate exactly the other way; to confuse and stifle the first fire of the Spirit. Still the process of God is contrived to bring us round, at last, to the simple state which we embraced, in feeling, and help us to embrace it in wisdom. Then the first love fills the whole nature, and the divine beauty of the child is perfected in the divine beauty of a vigorous and victorious manhood. The beginning is the beginning of the end—the end the child and fruit of the beginning. Where the transition to this state of Divine consciousness, from a merely self-conscious life under sin, is inartificially made, and distorted by no mixtures of tumult from the subject's own eagerness, it is in the birth, a kind of celestial state, like that of the glorified—clear, clean, peaceful and full, wanting nothing but what, for the time, it does not know it wants—the settled confidence, the practically-instructed wisdom, the established and tried character of the glorified. And yet all the better is it, imparadised in this glory, this first love, this regenerative life, this inward lifting of the soul's order, that a prize so transcendent is still, in a sense, to be won or fought out and gained as a victory. For life has now a meaning, and its work is great—as great, in fact, in the humblest walks and affairs as in the highest. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*)

The decline of spiritual love:—I. ITS INDICATIONS. How can we discern the subtle beginnings of this decline? At the outset, let us clear away an error which has

been the source of perplexity and even needless despondency to some earnest men. The loss of the first freshness of spiritual emotion is not necessarily a decline of spiritual love. The early excitement is not strength—true strength comes when it passes into action. The early splendour of the morning is beautiful, but who would wish that it should never melt into the stronger glory of the noonday? The first emotions of childhood are beautiful, but who would not exchange them in all their freshness for the calm, sober power of manhood? So in Christian life: the young excitement must mature into more quiet but abiding power. We must, then, look deeper than the changefulness of emotion to detect the signs of declining love; we must enter into the very nature of love itself, and we shall find them there. 1. Love is profound self-sacrifice. In love the soul comes out of the sphere of merely personal life: the thought of the “I,” and the “mine,” are no longer supreme; they almost vanish in living for another. A man’s self becomes associated with another self, and the two souls become one in devotion. Therefore, when our life finds another centre, and the world, or its friendships, or its ambitions, create our ruling emotions; when to be alone with God is no longer blessedness; when prayer loses its inspiration; when we begin to trust in our own power—to rest in self, and be coldly contented there; when the feeling rises, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” knowing not all the time that “we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind,” then the light of love is fading, and earthborn clouds are quenching its brightness. 2. Love proves its reality by the resemblance it creates to the beloved. No man can long conceal the fire that burns on his heart’s altar, so no true Christian can conceal his love to Christ. If we do not grow more true, more holy, more submissive, our resemblance to Christ is growing fainter and our love is declining. 3. Love proves its reality by its courage in confronting opposition. Therefore, when men can turn us aside, when expediency can mould us, when we stand like cowards looking back lingeringly on the path we have forsaken, afraid to return, afraid to go on; when, in the midst of a sinful generation, we are ashamed of Christ, and deny Him by selling our Christian principle for gain, truth for peace, devotion for safety, Christian profession for the friendship of the world—then is the fire of our love going down, the altar becoming cold, the temple growing dark, and “we have left our first love.” II. ITS DANGERS.

1. It renders the Christian a hindrance to the power of truth. A man professing to live for Christ, professing to be inspired by an infinite love, professing to believe in a glorious immortality, and yet cold and indifferent! The world reads that, and what wonder that it mocks at faith? Like an iceberg, such a man stands between the world and the sun of God’s gospel, chilling its warmth, and killing its power. 2. The inner coldness of heart is the beginning of denial in the life. The man whose love is declining is going on a path that will soon lead him into open denial, for when spiritual love lights not his altar, there are dark powers ever slumbering near that will kindle another fire there. The man’s besetting sin is never far away, and it will soon crowd his circumstances with temptation. And this danger is all the greater because it is so silent. III. ITS REMEDY. 1. “Remember.” It is sad work to look back over the past, and trace the path of failure and decline. The decay of all beautiful life is sad, but sad it is indeed when a man can trace it in his own soul. It is well to be thus sorrowful; it is a blessed thing if the tears do fall! 2. But rest not in mournful retrospection. “Repent, and do the first works.” Go back to the Cross of Christ, and gaze there till your coldness is melted and your love springs afresh. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *Spiritual declensions* :—

I. INQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF THIS FIRST LOVE, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH IT GENERALLY OPERATES IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. The early love of true believers has in it something which distinguishes it from that which follows afterwards, not indeed in its nature, but in its adjuncts and mode of operation. An increasing knowledge of Christ will increase and confirm our attachment to Him, and we shall be rooted and grounded in love, in proportion as we cultivate communion with Him. Yet at first there is often a greater warmth of affection, a more operative energy, a greater disposition to make sacrifices and to encounter difficulties, than is displayed in the subsequent parts of life. 2. This “first love” is probably so-called because it is generally the first principle that discovers itself in Christian converts; and before the other parts of their character have had time to develop themselves, we often witness some of the effects of this holy principle. (1) In producing an aversion of the mind from what is displeasing to the object beloved. (2) The Christian’s first love produces ardent desires and a vigorous pursuit after spiritual and heavenly objects. (3) It appears

in a fixed and decided resolution to cleave to the Lord, and to follow Him. (4) Early love discovers itself in an affectionate regard for those who have been the honoured instruments of bringing us to the knowledge of Christ. (5) Another effect of this principle is, a readiness to submit it to the institutions of the gospel, and openly to profess the name of Jesus, notwithstanding the difficulties which may lie in the way. 11. POINT OUT SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSION, OR WHEN IT MAY BE SAID THAT WE HAVE "LEFT OUR FIRST LOVE." 1. Losing that relish and savour of heavenly things which was formerly experienced, is an unhappy sign of religious declension. 2. A vain and trifling conversation is another of these symptoms of decay. When persons are disposed to talk about anything rather than the concerns of their souls, and the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, though there may be nothing directly sinful in the subject of discourse, yet it betrays a great want of spirituality, and a declension in the power of religion. 3. Religious declensions generally begin at the closet; and where the important duties of meditation, self-examination, and private prayer, are either totally neglected or performed in a superficial manner, we need no stronger proof of having indeed forsaken our first love. 4. The prevalency of a selfish spirit is another fearful sign. Instead of adding grace to grace, and building up themselves on their most holy faith, they are adding house to house, and land to land, while the edification of the Church and the general interests of religion are only regarded as secondary objects. What can more fearfully portend the ruin of a people who are in such a case! 5. A disposition to contend for doctrinal religion, rather than for that which is practical and experimental, is a sign of spiritual decay. Where persons are over-zealous about minor points, and are little concerned to promote the religion of the heart and a universal obedience to the will of God, they resemble the Pharisees, who were punctilious enough in tithing mint and anise and cummin, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, faith, and the love of God. 6. When the care of our families is neglected, and the observance of the Sabbath is not strictly inculcated, this also is a sign of spiritual declension. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *First love left*:—These are words of complaint; some would call it fault-finding; and, as such, might have repelled us from the complainer. But such is the nature and tone of the complaint, that we feel attracted, not repelled; humbled, but not hurt. The reproof is keen, yet it casts no shadow on the grace of the reprover. But the preface to the complaint claims special notice; for that complaint does not stand alone. And what strikes us most in it, is the minute enumeration of services performed by this Church, ere He speak the words of censure. "I know thy works," &c. He was no austere man, no hard master, no censorious fault-finder, but loving and generous, possessed to the uttermost of that "charity which suffereth long," &c. But it is not the mere recital of His servant's good deeds that strikes us; it is His manifest appreciation of these, His delight in them, His grateful sense of the service rendered. Faults there would be in these labours, but He sees none; imperfections in the endurances of trial, but He makes mention of none. He speaks as one full of gratitude for favours conferred. He names His servant's name, and is not ashamed to confess him. What a dignity, what a value, is thus affixed to every act, even of the simplest, commonest service for Him! But our text goes beyond all this. It teaches us His desire for our love, and His disappointment at losing it, or any part of it. It is not so much our labour as our love that He asks. The star had grown dim, the flower faded, warm love had cooled, and the Ephesus of the second generation was not the Ephesus of the first. Over this lost first love He mourns, as the gem which of all others He prized the most. It is not of slothful service, or waning zeal, or failing liberality, or slackening warfare that He complains. This is the substance of the complaint, the burden of the disappointment—the loss of half a heart! What true hearted man but must be humbled and melted down beneath it! Why should He love so much and I so little? But let us follow out a little further this Divine rebuke, this touching remonstrance. "Thou hast left thy first love!" And for what reason? Did the coldness begin on My side or on thine? Have I become less lovable, less loving? "Thou hast left thy first love!" And what or whom hast thou substituted? Hast thy power of loving ceased, and thy heart contracted? Or is there some second love that has usurped the place of the first? Is it the world that has thus come in? Is it pleasure? Is it literature or science? Is it business? Is it politics? Is it the creature in some of its various forms, and with the seductive glitter of its many-sided beauty? "Thou hast left thy first love!" And what hast thou

gained by the leaving? What has this strange turn of capricious affection done for you? Has it made you a happier, holier, truer, stronger, more noble, more earnest man? Ah! ask your hearts what has been your gain? A few indulgences which once you did not dare to venture on. A few gay smiles of worldly companionship. A few pleasures, for which, till your first love had gone, you had no relish. These are some of the things for which thou hast exchanged thy first love! For these thou hast sold thy Lord! Oh, heartless Ephesian, retrace thy steps at once! Thou didst run well: who hath hindered thee? Begin once more at the beginning. Go back to the fountain head of love—I mean thy Lord's love to thee, the sinner—there refill thy empty vessel. Go back to the blessed Sun, whose light is still as free and brilliant as ever; there rekindle thy dying torch; there warm thy cold heart, and learn to love again as thou didst love at first. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The fatal flaw in the Ephesian Churches*:—It is curious that a Church so marked for its patience and purity should be threatened with the loss of its very existence unless it repented. Had sensuality, or violence, or fraud entered the Church? Far from it, the Church is praised for its exclusion of the evil lives. A high morality marked its members, and in maintaining their high standard they had exercised their patient endurance of the world's scorn and opposition. Such a character had seemed to us almost perfect. But God looks upon the heart. He saw beneath this admirable exterior a weakening in the springs of spiritual life. The pride of consistency had continued to keep the Church to its old forms of excellence, but the Divine love in the heart, which had been before its only source of conduct, had lost its strength. The outward life was beautiful, but the heart was decaying. Zeal, orthodoxy, carefulness, boldness, heroism, were all there, but the love of God, out of which all these virtues should spring, in order to be God-like and permanent, was failing, and on this failing our Lord rests His eyes as He warns this prosperous Church of its danger. It had begun to lose its spiritual stimulus: to substitute self for Christ, pride for humility; to change principle into routine, and to make the religious life a perfunctory life. It was only a beginning, but God saw the danger of a beginning, and warned the Church accordingly. The beginning was the great departure; all else would be but natural sequence. Hence the beginning was to be stoutly rebuked. The beginning was the sin, the root-sin, to be repented of. We do not know to what influences the Ephesian Church yielded when it began to lose its love principle as the source of its life. It may have been a strong satisfaction with its own attainments. It scarcely could have been a conformity to the world. That side of error it seems to have avoided, and to have exposed itself on the other to spiritual pride. But these extremes meet. They are equally hostile to a genuine godly life. The worldly conformity is the more odious because it is so open and conspicuous, but the spiritual pride is as really a departure from God and a surrender to Satan. It is often hard to detect, because it goes clothed with the garb of a strict outward life, and this fact makes it peculiarly dangerous as a guide to undeveloped Christians. Still, there are marks by which even this type of Christian can be discovered, and its harmfulness avoided. These spiritually proud Christians are apt to show great severity toward all who differ with them. They are right in all their views and practices, and all others are wrong. Dogmatic and dictatorial, they will brook no opposition, and in disposition and in action (as far as they can be) they are as relentless as the Dominican inquisitors. Their faith is presumption, their zeal fanaticism. And all this comes about because their love is giving place to pride. You will see these zealots oversetting the Divine order for their favourite hobby. They will dip the shafts of controversy into poison and spend their strength in aiming them at their brethren who cannot pronounce their shibboleth. In all this they are most sincere. Their lives are pure and honest. They have much that commands commendation, and their steadfastness is a glory to the Church. But they have allowed the principle of love to fade in their hearts, and Satan has found an entrance there to vitiate motive and impulse. (*H. Crosby.*) *Red-hot religion* has its place and value, but white-hot religion, the silent, intense force which acts without sparks or noise, is a diviner thing. Is it thus with our love to God? Has that passion simply changed from red to white? Has sentiment become principle, the ecstasy a habit, the passion a law? If so, the former days were not better than these. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Ashes on a rusty altar*:—The religious profession of some people is like the ashes on a rusty altar, which show that there once were warmth and light and flame, but which also show that it is long since they worshipped there. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*) *Emotion wanted*

in religion:—It is said we want principle in religion, not sentiment. We want both. As well say we do not want sails, only the hull of the vessel. With conscience for the rudder, and truth for the hull, we want emotion—for that is *motion*, surely. And Christ says: "I know thy works. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love." *Decay of love*:—"As when the root of a tree perisheth," says Thomas Manton, "the leaves keep green for a while, but within a while they wither and fall off; so love is the root and heart of all other duties, and when that decayeth other things decay with it." *Neglected love*:—The hottest heart of love, like heated iron, if left, will get cold of itself. (W. W. Andrew, M.A.) *Zeal for truth must be loving*:—There is something without which even zeal for truth may be but a scorching and devouring flame; and that is the "first love," the love ever fresh and tender for Him who first loved us, the love which teaches us to win and not to alienate, to raise and not to crush, those who may only be mistaken in their views, and are not determined enemies of God. (W. Milligan, D.D.) *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen*.—*Now, and then*:—A celebrated orator once delivered a lecture, the title of which was "Now and Then;" and he proceeded to point out in eloquent language the vast improvements in civilisation and in useful arts which had been effected since his own early days. But a very different Now and Then is suggested by the text. 1. First, consider man as he appears to view when newly created. How great he seems! He was created in the image, after the likeness, of God Himself. This was true of him in respect of his personality. As distinguished from the things and creatures having life, which had been previously created, man was a "person" with powers of will, of origination, of causation, of thought. As a person, he was made capable of holding communion with a personal God. Man was created in the image of God, too, in respect of his dominion. He is the viceroy of God on earth, ruling a mighty empire; the rest of creation lies at his feet. Everything animate and inanimate was subjected to his sway. And this supremacy of man was a shadow of the sovereignty of God. Again, man was created in the image of God in respect of purity. There was not a thought of his heart which he would have been ashamed for God to know. His will was in entire harmony with the will of God. He rejoiced in fellowship with Him. 2. "Remember from whence thou art fallen." The fall of man. It is an event which we cannot ponder without being oppressed by a sense of awful mystery. Like all the facts connected with sin, its nature, its punishment, and the cure provided for it in the gospel, the narrative of the Fall leaves on the mind a deep conviction that God regards sin with a hatred which we cannot fully comprehend, and to which revelation itself does not supply the key. Mysterious as this doctrine of original sin is, the whole religion of the Bible assumes the truth of it and is based upon it. The evil extends not only to the actual deeds of men, but to the imaginations, the thoughts, desires, and affections of the heart. Those who have been brought up in a moral and religious atmosphere are happily guarded from the outbreak of sin by their habits and associations and the good opinion of those around them. But this outward appearance does not affect or govern the state of the heart. Even under favourable circumstances the corrupt state of the heart may be recognised. "Remember from whence thou art fallen." (1) Let the remembrance of it remind us of the absolute necessity of conversion. Man must be changed in nature and disposition, in mind and heart, in order that he may be restored to the image of God. (2) Let the remembrance of it deepen our humility. There is nothing which effectually hides pride from man, save the consciousness wrought in him by the Holy Spirit that he is by nature sinful. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." (3) Let the remembrance of it strengthen our hatred of sin. It is the man who comes up to the Temple, crying out of the depths of a contrite heart, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," whom God sends "down to his house justified." (4) Lastly, let the remembrance of it exalt our conceptions of the surpassing love of Christ, and of the mighty work of redemption, which He died to accomplish. He came to restore in man the image and likeness of God. There is no salvation in any other. Think of what man is. There is no tribe, no race, not infected with this taint of sin. The holiest men ever known are those who have most keenly felt, most bitterly lamented, their own sinfulness. There must be a mediator, a sacrifice, an advocate, to make such beings acceptable to God. (F. F. Goe, M.A.) *Backsliding*:—I. What then, in the first place, are THE GREAT EVILS which are peculiar to the sin of backsliding from God? 1. In the first place, I say to you that it is awfully aggravated for the reason that it is committed against more light than others have. There are

men that sin through ignorance. This cannot, however, be said of the man who has once "tasted that the Lord is gracious:" he does not sin because he knows no better. But you are to observe that there is a light which he cannot extinguish: and what is that? There is the light which his memory casts upon him. 2. Secondly, backsliding is a sin not only against light, but against the love of God. Backsliding is a sin against pardoning mercy. 3. In the third place, remember that this conduct greatly injures the cause of God. First of all it has a saddening effect on the Church itself. And, secondly, it very often happens that when one backslides from God he takes others with him. 4. This conduct condemns itself, and is a witness against itself. Observe the two states. Once you sought the Lord earnestly, and called on Him in sincerity and in truth. Remember what you were, and look at what you are now. I ask you for a moment, which of these two states is the right one? Would you say, I am right now; or must you not be obliged to say, Oh, no, those were the days in which indeed I was right. 5. Remember that you are bringing, by your conduct, an evil report on good men. How is it that you left the Lord, and left His people? What is the language of this conduct to those that are round about you but this—"I tried religion, and I did not like it?" There are, as I have said, evils in your case. And will you just allow me to remind you that you are in danger. You are in danger of desertion from God. Secondly, I must remind you that you are in danger not only of desertion, but of the terrors which are consequent on the fulfilment of His awful threat. If this be the case, then take heed, brethren, some of you are standing on the brink of a precipice now, into which, if you fall, oh, the terrors of that eternity, the horrors of that state, into which you will plunge yourselves by the carelessness of walking and backsliding from the Lord your God! (*P. C. Turner.*)

Religious declension:—I. WHAT ARE THE FIRST WORKS OF THE SINCERE CONVERT? They were penitence, prayer, and faith. II. A STATE OF RELIGIOUS DECLENSION, OF SPIRITUAL DECAY, WILL MANIFEST ITSELF EITHER IN A PARTIAL OR TOTAL ABANDONMENT OF THESE FIRST WORKS. III. THE ONLY WAY IS TO RETRACE THE STEPS YOU FORMERLY TOOK, OR AS IT IS EMPHATICALLY DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT, "TO DO THE FIRST WORKS." (*T. Morell, M.A.*)

His lost ideal:—The degenerate plant has no consciousness of its own degradation, nor could it, when reduced to the character of a weed or a wild-flower, recognise in the fair and delicate garden-plant the type of its former self. The tamed and domesticated animal, stunted in size, and subjugated in spirit, could not feel any sense of humiliation when confronted with its wild brother of the desert, fierce, strong, and free, as if discerning in that spectacle the noble type from which itself had fallen. But it is different with a conscious moral being. Reduce such an one ever so low, yet you cannot obliterate in his inner nature the consciousness of falling beneath himself; you cannot blot out from his mind the latent reminiscence of a nobler and better self which he might have been, and which to have lost is guilt and wretchedness. (*J. Caird.*)

I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.—*The coming of Christ a warning against declension*:—The awfulness of this warning will the more appear, if we consider to what Church it was directed. It was not spoken to the Church of Galatia, which had been so soon shaken from the faith, and entangled in the heresies of Gnostics and judaizing teachers: nor to the Church in Corinth, which had been rent by schisms, tempted by rivalry among its gifted members, and profaned by a contemptuous usage of the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. It was spoken to the Church in Ephesus, famous from the beginning for its burning and indignant zeal against the illusions of Satan; in the midst of which they that had used curious arts brought forth their costly books and burnt them before all men; illustrious for the long abode of St. Paul; for his three years of tears and warnings; for his epistle of prayers and commendations; it was to this Church so cherished, illuminated, and blessed that these words were spoken; "I have somewhat against thee: because thou hast left thy first love." The Ephesian Church in its outset so kindled and ardent, had, by slow and measured decrease, parted with its inward devotion. There are certain inferences which bear pointedly upon our own state and probation to be drawn from this warning, and to these we shall do well to turn. 1. For example, one great practical truth issuing from what has been said is this: that there may be much fair and really commendable religion, where all is not right at heart. Whole branches of the Church, with all their altars standing, and with all their visible appointments of Divine worship abundantly and publicly maintained, may yet be far gone before God. And a Christian, with all his usages of religion still continued, may yet have left his first love. For these

outward and passive customs are the last to give way; the inward disease must be far advanced towards its full and fatal ripeness before the outward habits, which cost so little and imply so much, are visibly affected. Cankered trees still put forth their leaves, long after their source of fruitfulness is dry. A sense of duty outlives all fervour of heart. What was once a delight is still felt to be an obligation. There can be no doubt that such is the state of multitudes whom the Church refrains to censure, and the world believes devout. 2. Another truth we may learn is, that when there is anything wrong at heart, all beside, how good soever it may appear and be, is marred. The state of the heart is the very soul of a religious life; and it is on this that the direct eye of God is fixed. Where there is any permitted declension of the heart, there two evils are always present. It cancels and annuls the whole worship and service of outward religion. It opens the beginnings of incalculable departures from God. And that for this reason. All acts of a religious life are thenceforth done with a slack and unmeaning intention. But all the force of obedience is in the motive. It is this that gives emphasis and meaning to fasts, prayers, labours, alms, for the Name of Christ. To feed natural hunger from mere natural benevolence is not ministering to Christ, but obeying a mere animal impulse, good indeed, but stunted, and not necessarily Christian. The same is more manifestly true of the higher acts of religion; for instance, the Holy Communion. What does it become but a dutiful formality, a heartless reverence? And further, as the motives of the heart grow slack, they become divided. It is intensity that unites the will; when it moves slowly and with reluctance it is soon distracted by a multitude of forces. Self-sparing, neighbouring temptations, worldly regards, personal schemes, private attachments, the influence of example, indulgence of particular affections of the mind, soon come in to divide a heart which has ceased to be united in the love of Christ. "Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." And this slack and divided state of heart, as it cancels the force of all religion, so it is the beginning of unknown declension. Even though it begin in no more than a colder affection or a relaxed resolution, yet it may end in quenching the Spirit of God. Slight diseases bring on great decays: the least bias in a never-resting wheel tends to the extreme deviations: a selfish heart may end in crucifying Christ afresh unto itself; and a soul without love may sink into the darkness of atheism. There are certain classes of people to whom these truths are especially needful. 1. As first, to those that have been carefully brought up from childhood in the knowledge and duties of religion. It often happens that those who in childhood have been deeply affected by religion, become in after years cold and relaxed. Little by little a new tone of feeling comes over them, and combines uneasily with old practices; and as the new power strengthens, they must needs give way first in one habit, then another, till the barriers of the whole character are broken through. 2. Another class of persons to whom these warnings are most pointed are those who, after a sinful or careless life, have once been brought to repentance. Afflictions, death of friends, great sicknesses, narrow escapes of life or ruin, worldly reverses, and the like, often bring about great changes of heart. They awaken sharp pangs of remorse, and a sudden sense of danger. This is followed by deep humiliation, and by emotions of sorrow and shame, by earnest resolutions. Perhaps few people have been afflicted without some such emotions as these; and true and heartfelt as they are, they often endure but a little time. They are the sudden burst of a forced shoot, not the steady growth of years. Their very fullness makes them unstable. After recovery or return to the usual ways of life, their first emotions gradually find a level in the ordinary commonplace of former habits. After awhile they countenance doubtful acts, and in the end themselves commit them: and then begins a reaction against the change. Little by little it is rescinded: first one resolution is annulled, and then another. In the end they return into their former selves with this only difference, that they have once repented, and again turned from their repentance. 3. And once more, these thoughts are full of wholesome admonition to those that habitually communicate. It is the effect of the Holy Communion to confirm the habits of mind with which we approach the altar. If we come to it with a lively repentance, and an awakened conscience, with thankfulness, and love, howsoever faint, be it only true, the spiritual virtues which go forth from that Holy Sacrament will deepen and perfect all these devout affections. If we come with unimpressed hearts and a sluggish conscience, with shallow emotions, and thoughts that terminate on the bread, and on the wine, frequent communion will be an occasion of making these dangerous states of heart inveterate. Perhaps you can remember that

day when, after long preparation, and fear, and anxious searching of yourselves, you came with a beating heart to the altar. How you were only half aware, as you knelt before the unseen Presence of your Lord, how near He was to you; and yet your hearts burned while your eyes were holden; and all that day, and all the day after, the consciousness was present still. Have you ever so communicated since? Do you now go to that Holy Sacrament with a cold self-possession, as to some familiar thing which you have measured, and weighed, and scrutinised; or with a mind less sensitive and fearful, and with a whole tone of character lowered and less devout? To all these, then, and to all who are conscious that they are not what they were, there is but one way of return. The first step is penitent recollection. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen." Call up again with all the vividness of memory the holier seasons of your past life. Remember your confirmation—your first communion—your earlier devotions—the aspirations you once breathed towards Him whose love has waxed cold in you; and the tokens of His tender care, to which you once clung so fast. The next step is by special confession of our particular and detailed offences, to repent; that is, in sorrow to forsake our present self with a perfect change of heart. Before we can be once more what we have forfeited, our new and debased character must be thoroughly put off. This is the penalty of sin. And, lastly, we must begin the greatest work of life all over again. "Do the first works"; that is, the earliest and the best—the first-fruits we offered in better days to God. This is the inevitable law of our recovery. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." (*H. E. Manning.*)

Neglect of the gospel followed by its removal:— What then is it which a man has to do who is desirous of becoming truly repentant? We reply that his great business is earnest prayer to Christ, that he would give him the Holy Spirit, to enable him to repent. Of course we do not mean that he is to confine himself to prayer, and make no effort at correcting what may be wrong in his conduct. But there is more in this exhortation than the summons to repentance: memory is appealed to as an assistant in the duty to which men are called. The great evil with the mass of men is, that, so far at least as eternity is concerned, they never think at all—once make them think, and you make them anxious; once make them anxious, and they will labour to be saved. We should feel that we were gaining a great moral hold on a man, if we prevailed on him to contrast what he is with what Adam was ere he ate the forbidden fruit. It is a contrast which must produce the sense of utter degradation. And if I have been like the Ephesian Church, what Scripture calls a backslider, may not memory tell me of comforts I experienced, when walking closely with God, of communion with eternity so real and distinct that I seemed already delivered from the trammels of flesh? It may well be, if indeed I have declined in godliness, that through musing on past times, there will be excited within me a poignant regret. There will come back upon me, as upon the criminal in his cell, the holy music of better days; and there will be a penetrating power in the once gladdening but now melancholy strain, which there would not be in the shrill note of vengeance. And thus in each case, memory may be a mighty agent in bringing me to repentance. But we turn from the exhortation to the threatening contained in our text, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Where are those Christian societies to which St. Paul and St. John inscribed their Epistles? Where is the Corinthian Church, so affectionately addressed, though so boldly reproved, by the great apostle of the Gentiles? Where is the Philippian Church, where the Colossian, where the Thessalonian, the letters to which prove how cordially Christianity had been received, and how vigorously it flourished? Where are the Seven Churches of Asia, respecting which we are assured that they were once strenuous in piety, and gave promise of permanence in Christian profession and privilege? Alas, how true is it that the candlesticks have been removed. And never let it be thought that such sentence is of no very terrible and desolating character. Come any evil rather than the unchurching which is threatened in our text. It is not merely that Christianity is taken away—though who shall measure, who imagine, the loss, if this were indeed all?—but it is that God must frown on a land from which He hath been provoked to withdraw His gospel; and that, if the frown of the Almighty rest on a country, the sun of that country's greatness goes rapidly down, and the dreariness of a moral midnight fast gathers above it and around it. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

*The gospel removed:—*I. THAT A NATION HAS BEEN UNCHURCHED, AND THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN REMOVED. 1. The Jews are an eminent instance. They had the gospel in a type while they enjoyed the ceremonies, they

had the gospel unveiled while they had the presence of Christ among them. (1) They were a people that had the greatest titles. They were called by His name (Jer. ii. 2, 3). They were His peculiar treasure; yet He hath flung this treasure out of His coffers. (2) The privileges they enjoyed. (3) The multitude of strange providences they had. He delivered them to the amazement of all round about them; they were a happy people, in being a people saved by the Lord (Deut. xxxiii. 29). They never were conquered, but God raised them up some patrons. Yet notwithstanding all these providences, whereby God so miraculously owned them, and all the dangers from whence He so powerfully delivered them, they are now pulled up by the root, persecuted by man, abandoned by God, the generation of His wrath (Jer. vii. 29). No spiritual dew falls upon these mountains of Gilboa. 2. The Seven Churches of Asia, to whom these Epistles are written, are another instance. How do their places know them no more, as once they were? Not only their religion, but their civil politeness is exchanged for barbarism. They have lost their ancient beauty for a Turkish deformity. Mahomet's horse hath succeeded in the place of the Gospel-Dove. The triumphant banners of an impostor advanced where the standard of the gospel had been erected. II. THAT THE REMOVAL OF THE GOSPEL AND UNCHURCHING A NATION IS THE GREATEST JUDGMENT. Can there be a greater judgment than to have the Word of God removed, to want a prophet to instruct and warn? The shutting up the book of mercy is the opening the book of justice. 1. The gospel is the choicest mercy, and therefore the removal of it the sharpest misery. The gospel is so much the best of blessings, as God is the best of Beings. Without this we should sink into an heathen or devilish superstition. 2. It is made worse than those judgments that are accounted the severest. Plagues, wars, famine, are lighter marks of Divine anger than this. God may take notice of a people under the smartest afflictions, but when He takes away His Word He knows a people no longer. We may live in our souls by the influence of the Word, when we have not bread to convey strength to our bodies; but how must the soul languish when it is deprived of spiritual food to nourish her (Isa. xxx. 20)? how doleful would it be to have the ground parched by the sun, the sky emptied of clouds, or the bottles of heaven stopped close without venting a drop of refreshing rain? But how much more deplorable is this judgment than the withholding the clouds from dropping upon our earth, or the sun from shining upon our fruits? 3. When the gospel departs all other blessings depart with it. (1) The honour and ornament of a nation departs. (2) The strength of a nation departs. The ordinances of God are the towers of Sion. The Temple was not only a place of worship, but a bulwark too. When the gospel of peace removes eternal peace goes with it, temporal peace flies after it; and whatsoever is safe, profitable, prosperous, takes wings and attends it. 4. God hath no other intention in the removing the gospel, and unchurching a nation, but the utter ruin and destruction of that nation. Other judgments may be medicinal, this is killing; other judgments are but scourges, this is a deadly wound. 5. This judgment is accompanied with spiritual judgments, which are the sorest. The pounding of the jewel is far worse, and of greater loss than the breaking the casket. Use:—Doth God often remove the gospel upon provocations, as the severest judgment he can inflict upon an unworthy people? Then—1. Be afraid of this judgment. How do we know but that God hath limited the preaching of the gospel, and the standing of the candlestick in this and that place only for a time; and when that is expired, it may be carried to another place? We see it hath been so with others. (1) Is not our profaneness a just ground of our fear? Have not many that have been lifted up to heaven by the presence of the gospel walked as if they had the seal of hell in their foreheads? A fulness of iniquity makes the harvest ripe and fit for the sickle (Joel iii. 13). (2) Is not the slighting of the means of grace a just ground of this fear? What can be expected, when children throw a precious commodity in the dirt, but that the parents should take it away, and lay it in another place, and lash them too for their vanity? God will not obtrude the gospel long against men's wills. (3) And what shall I say of the barrenness of the Church? When the ground yields but a faint increase, and answers not the cost and labour of the husbandman, he lays it fallow. The abatement of the powerful workings of the spirit is a presage of a removal or dimming the light in the candlestick. (4) And may not the errors in the nation step in as the occasion of our fears? Not little petty errors, but errors about the foundation. (5) What should I speak of the divisions amongst us? These preceded the ruin of the Jews, and made way for the fall of the Seven Churches of Asia. We may justly fear God will take away that light which we quarrel by,

instead of walking and working by. 2. If the removal of the gospel be so great a judgment we have reason to bless God for its continuance so long among us. 3. It should teach us to improve the gospel while we enjoy it. The time of the gospel revelation is the time of working. Good entertainment and good improvement invites the gospel to stay; ill-usage drives it out of doors. 4. Let us prevent by repentance and prayer the removal or eclipse of the gospel. The loss of your estates, the massacring of your children, the chains of captivity, are a thousand times more desirable than this deplorable calamity. Estates may be recovered, new children raised, fetters may be knocked off, new houses may be reared upon the ashes of the consumed ones, the possession of a country regained; but it is seldom the gospel returns when carried away upon the wings of the wind. Let us therefore seek to Him, chiefly to Him, only to Him; He only can remove the candlestick; He only can put His Hand as a bar upon the light. (*S. Charnock.*) To him that

overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.—*The heavenly Christ's first promise to the victors*.—I. THE VICTOR'S REWARD. 1. As for the substance, it is simply that all-comprehensive, and in one aspect greatest of all hopes, the promise of life. It is as impossible for us to conceive of what the manner of future existence is as it is to predict, from looking at the egg, what plumage shall deck the wings of the creature that shall, in due time, come forth from it and soar to the empyrean. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Only this we know, that life in all its meanings shall be perfect. Limitations shall drop away; weariness, weakness, languor, disgust, which often creeps over us, shall have no place there. The eternal life of heaven is one in kind with the eternal life that Christians possess here. If we are to have the life beyond, we must have its beginnings to-day. 2. Turn to the form which this promise assumes. It carries us back to the beginning of Scripture, and reminds us of the story of Eden, and the tree of life there. So the end circles round to the beginning, and the purpose of God shall be fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, and all the weary centuries, with their sin and crime and failures, shall be, as it were, in a parenthesis. II.

THE GIVER OF THE REWARD. Jesus Christ steps into the place here of the absolute disposer of all human affairs and settler of man's destiny. In another place in Scripture we read that the gift of God is eternal life; here the Giver of it is Jesus Christ. So He said on earth, as well as from the heavens. He is the Judge. He knows the history and the affairs of all men. He gives eternal life. The Giver is more than His gift. No mere humanitarian ideas of Jesus Christ and His mission avail to explain such words as these of my text. III. THE CONDITION OF RECEIVING. "To him that overcometh." Well, then, all noble life in the world is a fight. And to say "I trust in Jesus Christ" is not enough, unless that trust manifests itself in strenuous antagonism to evil, and realises victory over it. "To him that believeth" the promise is made in other places, but we must carry with that promise this other, "to him that overcometh"; and remember that no man who cannot say "I have fought a good fight" will ever be able to say with truth, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." What is an overcoming life? Many a man goes out of this world apparently a dead failure, beaten; none of his plans having prospered, none of his enterprises having been much else than semi-failures. And yet he may be one of the victors. And, on the other hand, a man that has achieved all that he desired, prospered in his business, been successful in his love, happy in his family, abundantly blessed with good, and crowned with universal applause, that man may be one of the beaten ones. For he conquers the world who uses it to bring him nearer to Jesus Christ; and the world conquers him whom it draws away from God. And how is that victorious life to be achieved? "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." I have said that mere trust without conflict and conquest cannot inherit the crown, but I also say that, wherever there is the true trust there will be conflict, and wherever there is the trusting conflict there will be victory. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The great condition.—I. SUCCESS IN THIS WORLD IS NOT A MATTER OF COURSE. Life in this world is surrounded by dangers, beset by enemies, liable to failure. This truth has its illustration in all spheres of life; even down to the lowest. The conflict of the ages is miniaturized in the life of the ephemera. The few hours of their existence are full of little dangers, little enemies, possible ills; and so with these the battle of life goes on. Now come up a little higher, and into a clearer region. Every species of vegetable life is shut off from its highest and fullest end by the line of the enemy. Every grain of wheat is menaced; so is every stalk of corn, every springing grass-blade, every flowering shrub, and every fruiting tree

And not otherwise is it in the animal kingdom—in the region of organised physical life. Of birds and beasts only a few reach the end. The rest perish by the way; are beaten back; are overcome. How full is our earth's crust with the dust of infant forms! And even if they continue, why continuance is often not health, not strength, not beauty, not the victory of physical life. But I widen the view. Within the body hides the true man, who, with the hand of his free choice, reaches out for the supreme object of life; and, by the voice of his will, summons all his powers to the contest. But is success sure to such a one? Why, the world is full of men who have failed here. Full of men who have murdered their manhood for gain, and then failed of the gain. But now come up higher. Introduce moral quality, and how still farther does this reduce the class who have overcome! Ever in the highest regions the classes are smaller. There are more toadstools than Yosemite pines. There are more ants than elephants. There are more in the schools who know how to read than there are who are able to call the stars by their names, or to paint a Madonna. So there are more who have made money than there are who have grown manhood; more who have gotten office than there are who have gotten character.

II. THE DANGER TO EACH HUMAN LIFE IS SPECIAL. That which is a temptation and a snare to me is none to you. The rock upon which you may split may be altogether out of your neighbour's path. He may not be steering in that direction. As with the body, so with the soul. What is poison to one is harmless to another. Some men can be trusted with money. It is not a bait for them; not what they care to sell their souls for. While others never can feel the money of others passing through their hands without an involuntary itching to close upon it. Then there is alcohol; nausea to many a stomach. No more desired, no more palatable, than croton oil. There is no possible danger to such from this quarter. Then right by their side are others who, with diseased brain and trembling nerves and blood on fire, would jump into hell itself for a draught of the accursed poison.

1. Natural constitution rules here. I do not mean in such a sense as to rid any man of responsibility. No matter where his blood came from, when at last it runs in his own veins a man must feel that it is his own. "My father was a drunkard before me, and I must be one." This is fatality, contradicted by our sense of freedom. It is materialism, contradicted by our own knowledge of ourselves, as more than mere matter. It is reasoning which no man's conscience accepts, and with which no man can go to the bar of God. So with a man's mind. It is his own at last. His own to correct, to guide, to inform. And if a man finds himself with a sceptical tendency, it is his duty to overcome here, as truly as in the region of physical appetite.

2. Providential circumstances rule here. Joseph was thrown into Egypt, and into the presence of great temptation, by no choice of his own. What now? Is Joseph thus relieved from responsibility? By no means. His providential circumstances govern as to the danger which he must overcome. The responsibility is still his own. So with us all. Your great spiritual danger may lie hidden in a circumstance which you had no voice in choosing. This may be wealth, or it may be poverty; your familiar associations, or an unavoidable crisis in your business affairs. But this does not free you from responsibility. Your obligation is still found in the word "overcome." You must overcome the temptation which is brought to bear upon your integrity, or you fall guiltily, and shall never "eat of the Tree of Life."

III. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A MAN, FOR ANY MAN, TO OVERCOME. His crown is his own, and he may defy any hand of earth or hell to rob him of it.

1. This truth rests upon the sincerity of the Saviour of men. "To him that overcometh," says He. And, when He so declares, He surely does not mean to mock men by grounding their salvation upon an impossible condition.

2. This truth, that a man may overcome, rests upon the infinite love of God. It is not possible for the human mind to conceive of infinite love allowing man to be placed in a condition that he may not overcome.

3. This truth rests upon the great provision of salvation which God has made for man. This salvation, inaugurated by the Great Father's love, must reach unto the end of making the salvation of every man to whom it comes possible. I now turn to the applicatory fulness of the text.

1. It holds up religion before us in its true greatness and worthiness. Overcome. This is the voice with which Christ speaks to men. Overcome. This is the true view of religion; the religion which thoughtful men need, which endangered lives need; which this world, so full of shams, needs.

2. Again, this subject calls to a careful ordering of the external circumstances of our lives, so far as these are in our power. If your fortune depended upon your lifting a certain weight, you would

not first place your feet upon bog or quicksand. Yet, in the moral world, how many needlessly expose themselves to disadvantage! 3. This subject holds up the Church and all the means of grace in their true light. They are so many helps to man in his great struggle. Let us not think of the Church as an end in itself; as a beautiful and dignified institution to which we ought to contribute our quota of respectable living. But rather let us think of the Church as our servant; as something out of which we can get help. So of the prayer hour in the midst of the busy week. So of any Christian service, and of every Christian duty. (*S. S. Mitchell, D.D.*)

The conflict of the Christian life:—I. THE CONFLICT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The Christian life is one of severe moral conflict. Its enemies are seen and unseen. They are malignant. They are subtle. They necessitate constant vigilance on the part of the good. 1. It is a conflict with evil principles. The soul of the good must be pure in its feeling, holy in its dispositions, loyal to Christ in its affections, and devout in its contemplations. 2. It is a conflict with evil men. It is sometimes hard to withstand the charming, but sinful, attractions of a friend, who would lead us into the very camp of the enemy. 3. It is a conflict with evil spirits. They watch the varying attitudes of the human mind, as manifested in external conduct, and seek each moment to effect the moral ruin of the good. II. THE VICTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. The victory is present. This is a distinguishing feature of the battle of the soul. It feels now the inspiration, and can sing the hymn of triumph, though, no doubt, when the last enemy has been conquered, which is death, and the soul joins the army above, its triumph will then be more jubilant. 2. The victory is progressive. Every time the soul is victorious in its battle it gathers new energy, and is more prepared for the conflict of the future. 3. The victory is glorious. It is a token of heroic manhood. It is strengthening. It is ennobling. It makes the soul veteran in goodness. III. THE REWARD OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. The Christian victor shall be rewarded with eternal life. 2. This reward will be Divinely bestowed and richly enjoyed. Christ is Himself the life, which He will bestow upon the faithful victor. The life will be such that the soul will be able to appropriate. Lessons: 1. That the Christian life is a stern conflict. 2. That the Christian has many aids in the conflict. 3. That victory over sin is possible to the good. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

The tree of life:—This first of the sevenfold promises to the victors carries us back to the earliest pages of Scripture. The end circles round to the beginning. The fruit is accessible again, not now, indeed, by man's reaching out his own hand to it, but as a gift from the Captain under and by whom the victors fight. This recurrence of the early possibility as a finally-accomplished reality is significant. Whatever Adam threw away Christ brings back. "There shall never be one lost good." But there is more than that. Paradise is better than Eden. I. THE GIFT. In the Gospel and Epistles of St. John, Life and its antithesis, Death, are two of his key-notes. In these letters to the Seven Churches the frequent recurrence of the same significant word Life, and its correlative, Death, is one of the main links of connection which, with all differences of form, bind together the Apocalypse and the Gospels. Now I cannot persuade myself that by this great word the writer means nothing more than continuous existence. He means that, but he means something more than that; and the something more is what warrants him in calling continual existence life. He means, in fact, the whole aggregate of blessednesses which makes the state of men whose lives are passed in communion with, and likeness to, God. This is his conception of what life consists in. Whosoever a heart is knit to God, there is the germ and the beginning of the only real Life. And the highest promise that can be given for the blessedness of that blessed and far-off future is, "I will give him to eat of the Tree of Life." It is well and fitting that this most comprehensive and general promise should be the first in the sevenfold series. Those which follow unveil various portions of its contents, and show us various aspects of its glory. Then, mark, it is the life of Jesus Christ Himself which He gives. He is the Life of our lives, the Soul of our souls, the Heaven of our heaven; and in Him is all that we need. Then, note how, in the other reference in this Book to that Tree of Life, we have set forth, very beautifully, the infinite variety and unbroken succession of the blessednesses that result to those who partake of it. The last chapter of this Revelation tells us that "it bare twelve manner of fruits," and that "every month." The former of these symbols sets forth that all delights and nutriments which spirit, heart, will, intellect, and whatever else may make up the immortal man can require are to be found there. Whatsoever is pleasant to behold, or sweet to taste, is all in Jesus Christ. And the other symbol of "yield-

ing fruit every month" suggests the unbroken succession of delights and blessednesses and sustenances. Sparkle will touch sparkle as in the moon's path across the sea, making a broad and continuous band of silvery shimmer. So "in Thy presence are pleasures for evermore." Then note, further, that this Life must begin here if it is to be perfected hereafter. Here we must begin laying hold of that Lord in whom are the life and the light of men, if we are ever to stand by His side, and receive from His hand fruits from the Tree of Life. They are sent across the sea to us in our island home, though it be planted in a happier and sunnier clime, and we dwell here amidst frost and snow. But the perfecting will be when we shall go to it. Fruit tastes best if fresh plucked from the tree. II. **THE GIVER.** This ascended Christ speaks in royal fashion. He assumes to be the Bestower of the fruit from the Tree of Life. And that suggests large thoughts about Him. I believe that in all senses of the word Life, from the lowest physical up to the highest spiritual, immortal, and eternal, the revelation of the New Testament, is that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, and the Agent of all creation and of all preservation, is its Giver and its Source. By virtue of His Divine nature He gives physical life to all that live. In Him "was life, and the life was the light of men." But it is not His Divine nature alone which has made it possible for Him to give to us the better life, of which my text speaks. He is the Source thereof, because He Himself has experienced the opposite. He died that He might be the Lord and Giver of Life; and rising from the grave, by the power of His death, and the merit and might of His sacrifice, He has become, for all who will trust Him, the Source of that life which standeth in the knowledge of God, and is perfected hereafter in immortal felicity and blessedness. Further, there is involved in this representation of Jesus Christ as the Giver of Life, the thought that, through eternity, all who live that blessed being in the heavens shall be as dependent upon Him for every moment (if we can speak of moments in the timeless state) of their continual existence as we are here below. He is the Fountain who hath life in Himself. We are the empty vessels that are filled from Him. III. **THE RECIPIENTS.** In the original the language is made very emphatic: "To him that overcometh, to him will I give." And that emphasis is very significant, if we remember how strongly this same John, especially in his Gospel, sets forth the thought that the condition of receiving life here and hereafter is faith. Faith without fighting is nothing. Fighting without faith, indeed, is impossible; but it is not enough that a man shall exercise an idle and inoperative trust, unless he can show his faith by his works. It is not the same whether you, calling yourselves Christian people, live in the daily struggle with the evil that besets you, or indolently let yourselves be carried unresisting along by the stream. It is the victor that is crowned. Then, again, observe that martial metaphor. "To him that overcometh." Then the highest conception of a noble life on earth is conflict. God has set us here, not to enjoy ourselves, but to wrestle and to run and to fight. Shame on us if we choose the indolent, self-indulgent, luxurious, and fatal course! What is it to overcome? The sailor who trims his sails and sets his helm so that adverse winds and opposing currents help him to run his course has conquered, though they howl about his ears and beat upon his barque. And the man who does not let the world hinder him from godly obedience, who does not allow it to divert him from the path of duty, who does not let its dainties spoil his appetite for the bread of heaven, who does not permit its near and flaunting beauties to affect his heart so that he sees no beauty in God and Christ, who does not take its good for his best—that man has conquered it. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The tree of life*:—I. **THE TREE OF LIFE AS EXHIBITED IN THE PRIMITIVE PARADISE.** The garden of Eden is not to be regarded merely as a place of delight and pleasure. It was a kind of natural temple; a sacred enclosure. In this consecrated spot was planted the tree of life; planted that its fruit might be eaten, and not prohibited like that of the tree of knowledge. Yet it was not to be partaken of in the same manner as the fruit of the other trees, which was appointed for food, since this tree was specially distinguished from them. Not without reason have many eminent divines considered this tree as a constant pledge to Adam of a higher life; and since there was a covenant of works, the tenor of which was, "This do, and thou shalt live"—and as we know that God has ever connected signs, seals, and sacraments with His covenants—analogy may lead us to conclude that this tree was the matter of a sacrament, the eating of it a religious act; and that it was called "the tree of life," because it was not only a means of sustaining the immortality of the body, but the pledge of

spiritual life here, and of a still higher and more glorious life in a future state, to which man might pass, not, indeed, by death, but by translation. II. THE SUBSTITUTION OF CHRIST FOR "THE TREE OF LIFE," TO GIVE HOPE TO MAN AS A SINNER. We see man, the sinner, expelled from the garden of Eden; all hope of receiving the pledge of mercy and kindness, by being allowed to eat of the tree of life, gone; and the way to that tree fearfully guarded. But it is equally certain that he was not absolutely excluded from hope. The judge passes sentence, but the judge also gives a promise; and man is bidden to hope in another object, "the seed of the woman." That seed was henceforward to be his "tree of life." 1. This presence of God was always approached through sacrifice. 2. It is this atonement which always keeps the way to God open and safely accessible. 3. To eat and live is the term both of the covenant in paradise and the new covenant of grace; but the subject is changed. To live in paradise, the fruit of the tree of life was eaten; but it was not a sacrifice. It was a pledge of life, but not through the death of a victim. There was then life without death. The flesh of Christ which He gives for the life of the world, and which we eat spiritually, this also is the pledge of life, but of life through death. Nor is the act of eating under the two covenants the same. One is expressive of the confidence of an innocent creature in the goodness and faithfulness of God never offended, promising life; the other of faith, properly speaking,—the trust of a guilty creature, of one who feels and acknowledges his guilt, in the rich and sovereign grace of God offended, and exercised through Christ alone. III. THE TREE OF LIFE, "IN THE MIDST OF THE PARADISE OF GOD." 1. The residence of the saints in another and a blissful state is called paradise. Could we remove from this world death, disease, age, infirmity, hatred, prejudice, ignorance, sin, the separation of friends, what a transformation should we witness! All this, and more, is done in the heavenly paradise; and upon its inhabitants and their blessedness is stamped the character of eternity. 2. The tree of life is there; and he that overcometh shall eat of it. This is a figurative representation of Christ. He is there to give this immortal blessedness, and to sustain it, and thus the benefits of His death run on for ever. The tree represents Christ to remind us that our life is from Him, and the whole of our salvation shall be eternally ascribed to His dying love. (R. Watson.) *Conquest and immortality*:—See what the promise is. Man's life seems to die out in death; to him that overcometh the world there shall be given a vitality that goes beyond this world. It is in virtue of man's power to overcome this world that he lays hold upon immortality. The reason why man, in spite of every discouragement, in spite of disease, and death, and the grave, has so inextinguishable a belief in immortality of life is the mastery which he has had over this life. If all men had been slaves of circumstances, mankind never could have believed in immortality. It is because man has proved his power to conquer circumstances that he has believed ultimately in his power to conquer that last great circumstance, and believed that death was nothing but an event, an experience in life. To him that overcometh it is given to eat of the tree of life, and to know himself immortal. (Bp. Phillips Brooks.) *How to conquer*:—When I was a child I read a book of Eastern Tales. It was the reading of the same book that stimulated Dr. Adam Clarke to study Eastern literature. One of the tales was to this effect: In a certain place, among bleak and gloomy mountains, was a steep and narrow pass, at the summit of which a spring sent forth streams of living waters. By the margin of the spring, nourished by its immortal rills, stood a tree which bore golden fruit, and as the breezes blew upon the trees it gave forth enchanting music. Whosoever might force his way up the difficult ascent should have these delights as his reward; but if he halted in his way, or attempted to turn back, he died upon the spot. Thousands made the trial, but none succeeded. At last an adventurous youth determined to win the prize, or perish in the effort. He asked one stationed at the foot what was the real difficulty, and how it could be overcome. He was assured there was no danger whatsoever, but that as he went along he would be assailed by hosts of voices assuming every kind of tone. All he had to do was boldly to go forward, and not regard them. Resolving not to heed the voices, he nerved himself for the endeavour. The moment he entered the valley the sounds began. It was as if the very rocks had tongues. Some groaned and entreated and warned, some mocked and jeered. As he stumbled on knee-deep among the reedy shanks and shapeless skulls of those who had perished in the attempt, a voice, seemingly at his very ear, implored him to take warning, and pause. Sometimes he was on the point of halting, but he pressed his fingers to his ears and hurried on. As he neared the top a chorus well-nigh stunned him; but he pressed his fingers the closer to his ears, and thus gained the

summit. Then every voice that had assailed him broke forth in loudest plaudits. (F. J. Sharr.) *An exhortation and encouragement to individual Christians*:—It is as if He said, No matter what the Church of Ephesus may be, to him that overcometh will I give a special blessing. Jesus says that to every member of His Church still. No matter what the Church is, it does not take away your individual responsibility. If the Church be holy and active, that does not lessen your responsibility to work. If the Church be sinful and idle, that makes your responsibility all the greater. The Church may have lost its first love. It is your duty, in the first instance at least, not to leave it, but to try to make it better. It is your duty, so far as in you lies, to overcome. Overcome evil with good, overcome strife by promoting a spirit of peace, overcome slothfulness by giving an example of activity, overcome fault-finding by showing a spirit of charity. Overcome, in the strength of Christ, the sins of yourself, the sins of the Church, the sins of the world around you. (C. H. Irwin, M.A.)

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.—*The Nicolaitane doctrine hateful to Christ and His Church*:—Here are two things. 1. An exception from the former reproof, "But this thou hast." 2. A commendation, "that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitanes." In the exception, note how careful the Spirit of God is, not to pass over any good in this Church, without due commendation. Reason: 1. He walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and exactly discerneth their works and describeth them. 2. Iniquity is not in Him to call good evil or evil good (Isa. xxxij. 5). He justifies not the ungodly nor condemns the innocent. 3. His pure eyes sever between the precious and the vile. He hath a fining pot, which tries gold from the dross; and a fan in His hand, which in the same floor severeth wheat and chaff. Use: 1. To teach us to imitate this goodness of God in acknowledging and encouraging good gifts and graces wherever they be. 2. Those sin against this example of Christ who (as flies follow festers) fasten upon the faults of men and are eloquent in disgracing their evils; some perhaps only pretended or conceived, but all that is praiseworthy they bury and traduce. 3. The ministers (the angels of the Churches) must imitate their Lord in writing to the angel of this Church, namely, so warily to touch upon the faults of professors, as not to throw down their profession or oppose all that is good in them. A wise husbandman will rather spare the weeds than hurt the corn. 4. Encourage good men in pursuing what is good; for, howsoever they may reap reproach among men, yet there is nothing commendable in them which shall want its due praise before God. 5. To keep us in humility. Sometimes we may be commended for many things, as was this Church, and yet be in great danger and near cutting off. Let us, therefore, take notice of these rules of wisdom. First, let no man content himself with some good things unless he separate from all evil, both in affection and actual endeavour. Secondly, content not thyself with the presence of some good things unless thou hast attained the best things and graces which only shall prevent this danger of casting off; such as are faith, love, repentance, humility, and the fear of God. Thirdly, content not thyself with many acts of goodness, but labour for sincerity, else many seemly and good things will prove unsound and unfruitful in the end. 6. Note the lively power of the Word of Christ. As His eyes are pure and sharp to discern between good and evil, so is His Word as piercing and descries in the soul and conscience that good or evil which other men, yea, the own heart itself, never takes notice of (Heb. iv. 12). Of the commendation that followeth, "Thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitanes." This commendation is for a work of the soul, for an affection, and that not such an affection as whereby they were carried unto good, but such an affection as whereby they were averted from gross evil. The good commended was this affection. Where observe the abundant patience and pity of the Lord, who for a poor affection, and that not unto good, but against evil, and that very weak and cold spareth this Church and removeth not her candlestick as she had deserved. The true commendation of a people or person is from true inward disposition and affection (1 Cor. iv. 5). Reason: 1. The just judge of all the world judgeth by the surest rule of trial, and approveth or reproveth from that which is within, and that which is hid from men's eyes. 2. The affections and desires are the feet which move the soul, and are most respected of God as being chiefly and principally commanded in the law; all the duties of the first table, and all service and worship of our Creator being comprised under that one affection of love. 3. The chief matter of praise or dispraise, both in good and bad men, is the desire and affection, because, first, action without affection is but as a body without a soul, as a painted fire without

heat, or the picture of a man without life. Secondly, God accepteth the affection more than the action, as in many kings of Israel, who did such and such good things, but the heart and soul and inward affections being wanting, they lost their commendation. Thirdly, for evil men: they are not so bad in action as in affection and desire; they have more evil in their hearts than in their hands. Fourthly, for good men: their goodness is not in perfection but in affection, and striving to perfection. And they have more goodness in their hearts than in their hands, as there is more water in the fountain than in the stream. 4. It is affections and desires that formally make a man good or bad, and lead him either to a final happy or unhappy estate. By all which arguments we have cleared the conclusion, that the true commendation of a people or person is from true inward disposition and affection. Use: 1. To discover the vain practice of many professors that engross knowledge and please themselves in speculation, contemplation, and place all their religion in hearing, reading, and adding to their knowledge; but look not to their affections or desires, to add or gain anything unto them, as if God's image consisted alone in knowledge and not in righteousness and holiness. 2. Hence we learn which is the most commendable ministry and most approved of God, namely, that which worketh most (not upon the understanding, but) upon the heart and affections, to warm the heart and make it burn within a man, as Christ's speech did the two disciples going to Emmaus. 3. To show who are the best hearers in our assemblies, namely, those that bring best desires and affections unto these sacred ordinances and exercises of religion. 4. If the Lord especially commendeth good affections, how unlike are they to the Lord, that pinch and reproach good affections, and are of that malignant quality that no good desire or affection can peep or appear in any near them, but they nip and blast it. 5. All Christians must be ambitious to seek this true commendation from the Lord, that He may say of us, But this thou hast, a true affection and sound desire of grace. In the persons that hate the works of the Nicolaitanes, note that a man may live in a deep consumption of grace for a time and yet retain the hatred of some foul sins. Reason: 1. A man wanting grace may hate some sins; and much more a man in decay of grace. A Jew may abhor a Samaritan, and yet have no love to the light and truth offering itself unto him. And hardly can we conceive any so wicked, but may hate some sin. 2. Carnal policy and earthly respects may ground the hatred of some sin, when neither the love of God nor the hatred of sin as sin, doth ground it. And any Ephesian can hate a Nicolaitane if his works will not stand with the light of nature, or credit of men, or name of profession. 3. Where the love of goodness is decayed, no marvel if hatred or evil be for sinister respects; and men may hate what the Lord hateth, though not because the Lord hateth it, for so did this Church. And no hatred of evil is good, but that which floweth from the love of good. Use: Here is a rule of trial of our hatred of evil. As is our love of good so is our hatred of evil. Fervent love stirs up earnest hatred; little love of good, little hatred of evil; no love of good, no hatred of evil. We must not hate the persons of men, but their evil works. Not the Nicolaitanes but the works of the Nicolaitanes (Psa. ci. 3; 2 Sam. xv. 31). Reason: 1. The object of our hatred must be works, not the man, because we must hate nothing that comes from God by grace or nature. God made the man, but the man made himself sinful. 2. We must hate no man without a cause. For, as we must not love vices for persons, so neither may we hate persons for vices, nor the man for his evil manners. 3. All just hatred floweth from the love of God; therefore we may not hate the person of our brother (1 John iv. 20). 4. There is an unwarrantable hatred which fasteneth on that that God hateth not. This is a hatred of malice, not of zeal which is kindled in heaven. But we know not the state of the persons of our brethren, whether they belong to God or no, but their works are hateful to God, and condemned in His law. Use: 1. We must not hate where no hateful work appeareth; and where it doth appear we must hate nothing else. 2. Seeing much deceit lieth herein, and we often do mistake ourselves thinking we do well in hating sins, when, indeed, our hatred is against persons, we shall do well to examine our hatred. For the trial whereof take these rules. (1) Hasty reproofs issue commonly more from the hatred of persons than of sins, when a man is reprov'd before his offence be proved (1 Cor. v. 1). (2) When our own causes be primarily interested with God's cause, we may suspect ourselves carried rather against persons than sins. When a man is as a lamb, mild and moderate in the cause of God, but a lion in his own cause, here is apparent hatred of persons more than sins. (3) The hatred of sin in another, but not of the same sins in ourselves, is the hatred of the

person, not of the sin. For true hatred of sin hateth it in himself most of all. No man can hate that sin in another which he loveth in himself. (4) The true hatred of sin doth restrain from sin in the hatred, and casts out raging, railing, scorning, swearing, reviling, or abusing of the person. For, where any of these discover themselves, the hatred is of the person, not of the sin. Satan is not cast out by Satan. (5) True hatred of sin goes ever with love and pity of the person. Moses so hates the sin of Israel that he still prayeth for their persons. (6) According to the measure of true hatred of thy brother's evil is thy rejoicing in his good. Here is the reason of the commendation: because they hated what God hated. God is well pleased when our affections are comfortable to His; whence are those many precepts and exhortations (Matt. xi. 29; Luke vi. 36; 1 Pet. i. 15). Reason: 1. His affections flow from His righteous will; He loveth good, because His nature is goodness itself, and His will the rule of all goodness. So He hateth evil, because His nature and will is absolutely contrary unto it. And, therefore, because His will must be our will, our affections must be framed to His also. 2. He is an unfailing pattern and an unerring example, and we shall be sure never to miss in the proper object of our love or hatred if we love what He loveth and hate what He hateth. 3. That perfection which we expect in heaven we must begin on earth. But this is the life of heaven, that our souls shall so perfectly cleave unto Him, as we shall be like Him, and be satisfied with His image. We shall never love nor hate but what He loveth and hateth. And to this life we must frame here in sincere affection and endeavour.

4. If one affection of ours resembling His prevail so much with Him, as we see in this text, how much more if all our affections were trained to His? If the hatred of gross evils bring us in request with Him, what would the love of all the goodness that He loveth. Use: This doctrine affords us many directions concerning our affections which are quick and hardly kept in order, and in which as many sins lie in the dark as in any other faculty. I. Concerning the matter of our hatred. Whatsoever we love or hate we must ask ourselves whether God loveth or hateth it. If God love it, it is worthy of our love. If God express hatred against anything we must take heed we affect it not. II. Concerning the rule of our hatred. That which we may lawfully hate we must inquire whether we hate it because God hateth it. For, first, heathen can hate some sins for the inconveniences they bring who hath no eye to God in them. Secondly, to avoid sin because men punish it, or human laws condemn it, or because shame attends it is not praiseworthy. Thirdly, even so it is in embracing good. To love religion and embrace the truth because the law favours it and the kingdom embraceth it, and is now the safest, is but policy, and an atheist can do it. But a truly religious heart therefore embraceth it, because it is the truth of God, and because God Himself loveth, honoureth, and promoteth it, and hath commended it to our love and trust. III. Concerning the measure of our hatred. Our direction is, that whosoever the Lord expresseth the greatest measure of hatred, we must also there most earnestly hate. For our affection must even in the measure of it be framed to God's. The manner of our hatred. 1. We must try the intention and vehemency of our affections. The Lord doth not lightly hate sin or barely dislike it, but pursues it with an hostile hatred, and abhors it as the most hateful thing in the world, even so we must not only simply refuse sin or forbear it, but bear a fervent indignation against it, esteeming it the most hateful and hurtful thing in the world (Psa. cxix. 163). 2. The Lord hateth sin generally and universally; not one, or two, or more scandalous sins, but all sin everywhere, both all kinds and all acts of sin. So we must try our hatred by the generality, whether we hate all the ways of falsehood. It is not enough to hate this or that sin, but the heart must be set against all that is called sin. 3. The Lord hateth sin only and innocently; so hateth evil, that He hateth not the good near it or with it; no, nor will not hate the good for it. He will be sure His wrath shall fasten on the works of Nicolaitanes, but rejects no good for evil, no wheat for chaff, no gold for dross. So we may not hate good with evil or for evil. 4. The Lord hateth sin implacably; He can never be reconciled unto it, but goes on to the abolition and destruction of it. So must we try our affection against sin, whether it be a short fit of anger or an extreme just hatred. And the rule of trial of just hatred is, that of the Jews toward their wives, "If thou hatest her put her away"; divorce thy sin from thyself: allow it no room or harbour. One thing it is for a Jew to be angry at his wife, another to hate her to divorce. And so are many sometimes angry at some sins in extremity, and will curb and moderate and keep them in some compass; but they put them not away altogether because they hate them not. 5. The Lord hates all sin perpetually and constantly. His wrath is so kindled against it that it can

never be quenched, but burneth to the bottom of hell. So if our hatred of sin be true it will be lasting and increasing. We see, therefore, what an advantage it is to hold our affections in conformity unto the Lord's, and a piece of His own image who, being perfectly good, cannot but hate that which is perfectly evil. And the more we grow to His perfection in good the more perfectly must we hate all that is evil. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.—God's voice to the Church:—**I. THAT DIVINE REVELATIONS ARE GIVEN TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 1. They are revelations of the truth of God. 2. They are revelations of the condition and duty of the Church. They are practical in tendency. They are faithful. They are definite. They are plain. They are merciful. 3. These revelations are given by the Divine Spirit. He only can give men to see the beauty of truth and the beauty of holiness. II. THAT DIVINE REVELATIONS SHOULD BE ATTENTIVELY HEEDED BY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 1. The Church should seek to understand the revelations of God. These revelations of God are clear to the devout soul. 2. The Church should believe the revelations of God. They are precious. They are Divine. They contemplate important issues. They ought, therefore, to awaken the warm assent of the Church. 3. The Church should submit to the revelations of God. If these Asiatic Churches had meekly yielded to the messages sent to them, they would have averted the retribution that came upon them so woefully. III. THAT DIVINE REVELATIONS ARE FREQUENTLY NEGLECTED BY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Lessons: 1. That God speaks to the Church. 2. That the Church should cultivate its hearing faculty. 3. That the utility and destiny of the Church is dependent upon the heed it gives to the messages of God. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) **The paradise of God.—Heaven, a garden:—**I. Heaven is not merely a state, but a place. Men try to be too sublimely immaterial when they deny the thought of locality to human conceptions of heaven. Dr. Chalmers says we "make it a lofty aerial region, floating in æther, suspended on nothing." Are we not wrong then? For—1. Is it not probable that God is the only pure Spirit? 2. Do not all human instincts and all Scriptural revelations point to a place? II. Heaven is a place of SURPASSING BEAUTY. III. Heaven is a place of APPROPRIATE LABOUR. IV. Heaven is a place of God's SPECIAL HABITATION. It is a most sacred reminiscence of paradise that the Lord God was there amid the trees of the garden. The central glory of heaven is the felt presence of God. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Paradise:—**1. First of all, it is plain, is it not, from the persistent use of this word "paradise," that departed saints already find the consequences of the fall reversed, and the old primæval blessedness of man restored to them in Christ? To be done with unfriendly estrangements such as part the best friends here, and all fear of change, which haunteth even earthly love; to be done with unrequited labour, done with evil speaking and ingratitude, done with an unquiet mind and black care that sits behind the rider; to find for all the ills of this life only refreshment and sweet repose, to find peace in the place of strife, and for labour rest, and progress with contentment, and endless youth and gain of knowledge that adds no sorrow, and ever perfect love and charity—this reversal of all that ancient curse which sits upon mankind, this, were there no more but this, how good were it! how good to look forward to! how blessed to possess! 2. In the next place, it is made abundantly evident that the second paradise excels the first in this—that its blessedness is secure from loss or change. Not only is sin shut out, with all sin's fruits, but it is shut out for ever. Under whatever aspect the state of the beatified dead is represented, its permanence is always made emphatic. Is it the home of a heavenly Father? Then its chambers are styled "mansions," "abiding places," as the word signifies, they never lose their tenants. Is it like Eden, a garden of God? Then my text tells you that the tree of life stands open there to all the happy dwellers, and the Lamb shall guide their feet to fountains of immortal life. Or is it a strong city as well as a garden enclosed? Then the conception of its imperishable foundations and lofty walls is that it stands secure at the centre of the Almighty empire—a capital free from the possibility of corruption, dreading no foe. 3. But, in the third place, a careful examination of all the intimations in Scripture leave it, I think, beyond doubt that our paradise is no middle ground of temporary exile, like the Sheol of the Hebrews, but includes admission to the immediate presence and vision of God. One thing only seems needful to complete the felicity of our Christian dead—that is, the resurrection of the body. But though that be wanting, there is, nevertheless, a heavenly paradise, for they behold the face of God in light and glory, even while they are waiting still for the

full redemption of their bodies. In all the higher moods of earthly experience after what do you find the pure heart of God's children pant, when at their best, if not after full knowledge of Jesus, full fruition of His wondrous love, full likeness of His holiness, full devotion to His service, full communion with His person? These deep yearnings of saintly hearts on earth, think how they are to be gratified when, every veil withdrawn, these saints behold Him as He is, and are satisfied with His likeness. Close to that primal fountain of spiritual life, of light and joy and energy and bliss, low, at His feet, near to His heart, within the reach of His voice, within the beaming of His eyes, there must be the Christian heaven. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The paradise of God*:—Eden, with all its loveliness, is to be surpassed. It was but a faint type of that heavenly paradise which is opened by Christ to all believers. Futurity is to transcend antiquity. The best is to come at the last. How can we speak of that heavenly paradise? Experience cannot help us. And imagination grows dumb beneath that "weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17), or is blinded by that excess of light. It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive it. Emblems we have, but they are nothing more. We can only know the Invisible as shadowed by the things that do appear. What various and enchanting hopes start at such words as these: life, a feast, a temple, a city, a kingdom, a Father's house, glory, the paradise of God. Walking in permitted meditation amid that heavenly paradise, behold—1. Beauty. How lovely the brief descriptive touches found in the Divine Word! Emblem mingles with emblem and glory blossoms into glory. Is it a garden? The privileged John thus describes it (chap. xxii. 1-5; vi. 16, 17). Is it a city? It is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (xxi. 2). "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (xxi. 11). And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished," &c. (xxi. 19-21). These are emblems of surpassing loveliness. Nothing more than emblems? Is there no city radiant in splendour? Is there no garden with its crystal river and trees of unfading beauty? Who can say? Any way, if only emblems, heaven is a place of transcendent beauty. 2. Knowledge will mark the inhabitants of the paradise of God. We shall not need to ask, "What is it?" We shall know it by intuition, and not by tedious search. There to see will be to understand. No mistake will be made by us. And the Great Teacher will instruct us by parable no more. Wide, and ever-widening, will be that sphere of knowledge. But how little all else will be to the knowledge we shall then possess of the Divine character and dealings. 3. In that heavenly paradise there will be supreme enjoyment. Not the sensual pleasures of a Mahometan paradise, but the highest satisfaction and delight of our quick and ever-quickening spiritual powers. (1) The joy of fellowship. In heaven there will be no solitude in a crowd. Thought will be interchanged. Love will glow. No distrust will cool that warmth of friendship. And more, infinitely more than all, we shall be with Christ. It will be more than vanished paradise come again—more than a restitution of all things. (2) The joy of holiness. No hindering defilement! No lingering spot! (3) The joy of rest. The hurly-burly done, the last stroke struck, the last foe vanquished—oh, how blessed the everlasting rest! (4) The joy of service. Who can tell in what various ways we shall find highest, purest exhilaration in doing God's commandments? (chap. xxii. 3). One part of the service will be worship (Psa. xvi. 11). 4. And yet another thought in the paradise of God—eternity. No tree of the knowledge of good and evil is there. The life of probation is over. In that paradise is no decay, no old age, no death (1 Peter i. 4). And this high estate of glory, this paradise of eternal bliss, is Christ's purchase for men, Christ's donation to man. (*G. T. Coster.*)

Vers. 8-11. Smyrna.—*Smyrna—the poor Church that was rich*:—The story of Smyrna, both spiritual and material, the delineation of its circumstances and of its experience, is simple. Nothing is said of the achievements of the Church; the significant clause, "I know thy works," which meets us elsewhere, is wanting here. No complex ethical state is set before us. The history of Smyrna is compressed into a single word, "tribulation"; it had one solitary call, to fidelity. Of Smyrna this much is recorded—the Church was persecuted by the Jews. The life of the Church had been one of tribulation, and in its tribulation it was poor. Of the social influence which conciliates authorities and tempers persecutions, of the comforts which lighten trouble and solace the afflicted, it had none. And the conflict was to wax sorer. Reproach will be followed by imprisonment. Out of the very soreness of the trouble there come suggestions that carry consolation with

them. The sufferings of this insignificant Church have a dignity all their own; and not only a dignity, they have an importance too. As it had been with Christ, so should it be with His followers in Smyrna. Unrelenting hostility was to be followed by eternal victory. "Fear not the things which thou art going to suffer. . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." There is something very suggestive in this picture of the Church at Smyrna, in the fact that it lay aside from the various movements—the false doctrines and the worldly confusions—which elsewhere had already begun to perplex the Christian life. To us, also, there have come manifold complexions of social and religious interest; the Christian life of to-day is very full. Yes, life is for us Christians to-day very full of meaning, and piety is very rich. The effort to win all for Christ will be very arduous, we know; but the hope is inspiring, the victory will be worth the winning.

I. THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA WAS RICH BECAUSE IT HAD CHRIST. Observe the sublimity and the tenderness of the titles under which the Lord reveals Himself—"the first and the last," "He who died and lived again." The former of these titles is taken from the most majestic, the most exultant, of Old Testament prophecies, the prophecy of Israel's restoration. One of the most touching, most searching things Henry Ward Beecher wrote was his description in "Norwood" of the poor woman, wife of a lazy, drunken husband, rearing seven children in hunger and weariness, who used to turn to these chapters, and make the mystic promises her own. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. . . . thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name." She called her daughter "Agate," because she read, "I will make thy windows of agates." She did not know what an agate was, but she was sure it must be something beautiful, and God's windows were to be of agates. "She seized the happy thought—'I will call her Agate. Perhaps the Lord will make her like a window to my darkness.' Thus she was named." There is an equal wealth of suggestion in the second of the two titles. "The First and the Last" was persecuted as Smyrna was. It is He who had gone on to death, and was not holden of death, who says—"Be thou faithful. . . . I will give thee the crown of life." They who are in such a fellowship cannot be poor.

II. THEIR VERY POVERTY MAKES THEM RICH, FOR IT GAVE FIRMNESS TO THEIR GRASP AND REALITY TO THEIR POSSESSION OF CHRIST. We have many various tokens of the sufficiency of the Divine grace; but there are some among us who never knew what the power of God was until, absolutely emptied of self-trust, they cast themselves on Him; who, having had their self-complacency shattered, ventured to believe that the true riches was not in anything they had attained or were, but in the living God. The riches of Smyrna may be seen from another aspect. In Christ and their own dependence on Him was enough for their needs. They were not overtaxed; they were called to be faithful, and they were faithful. Their very detachment from the interests in which other Churches were engrossed made them the more able to abide in that fidelity which was their peculiar vocation.

III. IN THEIR NARROW SPHERE THE CHRISTIANS OF SMYRNA HAD ENOUGH DISCIPLINE FOR THE ETERNAL FUTURE. We think sometimes of the vast, immeasurable future and its stupendous possibilities. And we think that the burden is laid on us, in a few short years, to prepare ourselves for it all. No wonder that thus thinking we are appalled, and that we forbode new disasters in our probation, ending, perhaps, in a second death. But we are wrong. It is not what we take with us, in attainments or even experience, which will determine our fitness for that future, but the men we are. And the man may be as truly fitted to start upon "his adventure brave and new" by mastering one lesson, as by acquainting himself with many; by being faithful unto death, and so laying eternal hold on Christ, as by laying up in a wide and varied experience a good foundation for eternal life. Fidelity, in much or in little, has all the promise of fidelity; its reward is to be unmoved. There is one other note of tenderness to be referred to in this message—the Church is to have "ten days of tribulation." Some of the commentators tell us this means a short time, and others that the time is to be long. All depends on our point of view. To Smyrna, in its death agony, any protraction of the trouble would seem long; in the light of eternity, when wearing "the crown of life," the victors would think it short. It was a fixed time, definitely limited by "the First and Last"; and any fixed time will one day seem brief; they who have come out of their travail think of the anguish no more. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*)

Letter to Smyrna.—**I. CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THEIR MORAL CONDITION.** In support of this assertion it is only necessary to read the superscriptions of the letters "unto the seven Churches which are in Asia." By the

title or representation which the Son of Man assumes, we may anticipate the revelation in which He is about to appear. In this, I am persuaded, we have an explanation of the varying experience of the Christian, and of the diversified and changeful mission of the Church. To one man, or to one Church, Christ presents Himself bearing "the sharp sword with two edges"; to another, with eyes blazing with penetrating light; to another, as holding the key of opportunity; and to another, as grasping infinitude, and girt with the memorials of death and the pledges of ascension. It is possible to have all these, and many more, visions of the selfsame Saviour. Our apprehensions of His identity are regulated by our moral conditions. 1. As our Saviour is the First and the Last, all things must be under His dominion. "The First." Who can reveal the mystery of these words, or number the ages we must re-traverse ere we can behold the first gleam of that horizon which encircles God as an aureole of unwaning light! "The Last." Another mystery! This expression bears us onward until the surging sea of life is for ever hushed, until the Divine government has answered all the purpose of Infinite Wisdom. Over what cemeteries we must pass, I know not; we must advance until the Creator exclaim from His throne, as the Redeemer cried from the Cross, "It is finished!" 2. As our Saviour was dead and is alive again, so we, who are now enduring the fellowship of His sufferings, shall know the power of His resurrection. "I was dead." The counsels of eternity are epitomised in this declaration. The problem over which the ages bent in perplexity is, in reality, solved by this fact. "Alive again." Let me inquire around what centre the Church assembles. Do you hasten to reply, the Cross? I answer, not there only. The Cross first, but afterwards the grave! In the centre of the Church is an empty tomb, and to a doubting world the Church can ever answer, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And, "seeing" it, what then? Why, from the sacred rock a living stream breaks, and as the countless multitudes drink, they exclaim, "These are the waters of immortality." II. CHRIST ASSURES HIS PEOPLE THAT HE IS INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH EVERY FEATURE OF THEIR HISTORY. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty." The "I know" of love is the smile of God. Jesus sees our sufferings, is present in the cloud of our sorrow, needs not to be told what the soul has undergone, but breaks in upon the gathering darkness with words which bring with them the brightness and hope of morning, "I know, I know." The fact that Jesus knows all that we suffer for Him should serve three purposes. (1) It should embolden us to seek His help. He is within whisper-reach of all His saints. All the desires of the heart may be expressed in one entreating sigh—one appealing glance. (2) It should inspire us with invincible courage. As the presence of a valorous leader stimulates an army, so should the assured guardianship of the Son of God inspire every soldier of the Cross. (3) It should clothe us with profoundest humility. That we can do anything for Jesus is a fact which should extinguish all fleshly pride. He might have deprived the Church of this luxury of suffering in His stead; but it hath pleased Him, in the infinite fulness of His love, to permit us to be wounded for the sake of His name. Are you a sufferer? To thee Jesus says, "I know." Is not that enough? The tear, indeed, falls downwards, but the sound of its falling flieth upward to the ear of God. III. CHRIST REVEALS TO HIS SUFFERING SAINTS THE FACT OF THEIR IMPERISHABLE WEALTH. Turn your attention to the ninth verse, and determine which is its brightest gem. Look at the parenthesis, and you have it! How like the effusion of the Infinite mind! A volume in a sentence—heaven in a parenthesis! It flashes upon one so unexpectedly. It is a garden in a wilderness, a song of hope mingling with the night-winds of despair. Slowly we pass over the dismal words, "Thy works, and tribulation, and poverty," and with startling suddenness we overpass the separating parenthesis, and then—then! Outside of it we have cold, shivering, desolate "poverty"; and inside "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"! Think of it! The very typography is suggestive; only a parenthesis between "poverty" and "rich"! And is it not so even in reality? What is there between thee, O suffering saint, and joys immortal? What between thee and thy soul's Saviour? Only a parenthesis—the poor, frail, perishing parenthesis of the dying body. No more. There is but a step between poverty and wealth. The history of transition is condensed into one sentence, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Let the parenthesis fall, and you will see Him as He is. When, therefore, we estimate the wealth of a good man, we must remember that there is a moral as well as a material, an invisible as well as a visible, property. The good man is an heir, and his heirship relates to possessions which no human power of calculation can compute. If you as a Church ask me how you may

ascertain whether you are "rich," I should answer—(1) Is your faith strong? (2) Are your labours abundant? (3) Are your spiritual children numerous? IV. CHRIST COMFORTS HIS SUFFERING ONES BY DISARMING THEIR FEARS. I cannot arbitrate between contending critics as to the precise signification of the expression "ten days." It is enough for me to secure a firm foot on the general principle which underlies the prediction. That general principle is, that there is a limit to the suffering of the Church. Persecution is an affair of "ten days." Diocletian is the tyrant of a vanishing hour. To-day he raves in madness, to-morrow his last yell has for ever expired. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." The apostle triumphantly contrasts the brevity of suffering with the duration of glory. In prospect of suffering, Christ says to His people, "Fear not." But why this counsel? Does it not stiffen the heart as a word of chilling mockery? O Son of God, why tell the people not "to fear"? It is because He knows the full interpretation of suffering. Suffering is education. Grief is discipline. Let me further remind you that those sufferings have been overcome. Suffering is a vanquished power. "I have overcome the world." We have fellowship in our suffering, a fellowship that is mastery. V. CHRIST SOOTHES AND NERVES HIS SUFFERING SAINTS BY THE PROMISE OF INFINITE COMPENSATION. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Jesus Christ will not only deliver His saints from the sphere of suffering; He will introduce them into the sphere of eternal rest and joy. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The letter to the Church at Smyrna:*—I. ITS TEMPORAL CONDITION. The letter indicates that it was a condition of great trial. It refers to "tribulation," "poverty," "prison." 1. Its present trial. There was "tribulation." This is a term which represents trials of all kinds. But the special trial mentioned is "poverty." "I know thy poverty." Christ notices the secular condition of Churches. (1) Though their city was rich, they were poor. (2) Though they were distinguished by great spiritual excellence—for Christ Himself said, "Thou art rich," that is, spiritually rich—they were secularly poor. In this world man's secular condition is not always determined by his moral character. Character, and not condition, is everything to man. As compared to this, poverty is nothing. It is the man that gives worth to the condition, not the condition to the man. The gospel is for man as man, and the less man is artificialised the more open is he to its influence. 2. Its prospective trial. The letter indicates that great persecution awaited them. Several things are referred to as to the coming persecution. (1) Its instruments. Jews by birth but not by character, not circumcised in the heart. The old religion has ever hated the new. How can it be otherwise? for the new examines the character, history, and pretensions of the old, and refuses submission to its authority and influence. (2) Its instigator. "The devil." He worketh in the children of disobedience—inspires them, raises their antagonism to the cause of purity, freedom, and happiness. (3) Its form. "Cast into prison." Incarceration in some respects is worse than martyrdom. Better die than to live without light, freedom, fellowship. (4) Its duration. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." II. ITS SPIRITUAL OBLIGATION. The letter inculcates two duties. 1. Courage. "Fear none of these things." Why fear? "Thou art rich" in faith and hope; in Divine promise, succour, and fellowship; therefore, fear not! 2. Fidelity. "Be thou faithful unto death." When Christ left the world, He put His disciples in possession not of money, or land, or titles, or honours. These He had not to bestow. But He gave them His ideas, His purposes, His character, incomparably the most precious things. He did not write these things in books, and leave them in libraries. He trusted them to living souls, and said, take care of them. What a rare thing it is, alas! to find a man worthy of truth—worthy of the quantity and quality of truth which has been put into his possession. Notice here two things—(1) The extent of this faithfulness. "Unto death." Fidelity must not give way at any future point of life. No event can justify its suspension for a moment. It must stand even the fiery test of martyrdom. (2) The reward of faithfulness. "I will give thee a crown of life." Let thy faithfulness be strong enough to die for Me. (*Caleb Morris.*) *The address to Smyrna:*—I. THE PRELIMINARIES. 1. The party addressed, "The angel of the Church in Smyrna." Of the time and manner in which a Church was planted in this city no authentic information remains. It is probable, from its contiguity and commercial relations with Ephesus, that the gospel first reached it through that channel. We do not find it visited by any of the apostles, or mentioned in their epistles. Some private Christians, who were merchants, or who had been led to settle in that city, after receiving the light of the gospel elsewhere, may have formed

the nucleus of a Church, which, toward the close of the first century, had become eminent for its purity and extent. 2. The title which the Saviour assumes to this Church. "The First and the Last, which was dead and is alive." Though equally belonging to the whole, one part of Christ's character and office is revealed more to one Church than another. He is more to some Christians than others, though He is all things to all. The Church at Ephesus needed to be reminded that His watchful eye was upon them, to stimulate them to recall their first love, and to do their first works; but the Church at Smyrna, which was more pure, and yet had to pass through fiery trials, needed most of all to dwell upon the unchangeableness of His power and love. II. THE ADDRESS to the Church in Smyrna. 1. The recognition of its present state: "I know thy works," &c. There were genuine Christians amongst them, and there were Jewish pretenders. These were viewed differently by Him whose "eyes were as a flame of fire." He knows who are right-hearted, and He knows who are insincere. He observes particularly those who rely by faith upon His merits alone for the hope of eternal life, and those who confide in their own observance of moral duties, and ceremonial institutions. Let us attend, now, to the allusion made to the party by which the Church at Smyrna was principally opposed. The address is not to them, but to the Church respecting them; to sanction its views, and to guide its proceedings in future. "And I know the blasphemy," &c. They were Jews, who magnified the ceremonies of the law above the grace of the gospel; and looked upon Christianity as heretical, except as far as it could be amalgamated with their institutions, and made subservient to their interests. The synagogue was far above the conventicle in their esteem. They boasted of their privileges, as Jews, and cherished the old conceit of being the favourites of heaven, and heirs of the promises, on account of their natural descent from Abraham. How dangerous are all systems and forms of religion which cherish and confirm the self-righteousness of human nature! How much worse than none at all! The weapons of religion are transferred, by these means, into the hands of its adversaries. There might have been a few in the Church at Smyrna who, finding these Jews had some truth on their side, were inclined to think more favourably of them than they deserved. The boldness with which they averred the superiority of their station, and their long prescriptive rights, would naturally have its influence upon a certain class of minds; and those especially who had counted all they could have gained by Judaism as loss for Christ might still have looked with some hesitation upon the safety and propriety of the step they had taken. For some such reason the Redeemer sees fit to express His opinion concerning them. This He does in most decisive terms. He accuses them of blasphemy, a crime which the Jews were taught to hold in the greatest detestation, and to punish with the most summary and humiliating death. He denies that in any sense in which they could boast they are Jews. Then what are they? They are, he says, "the synagogue of Satan." In the sense in which they are not Jews, that is, in a religious and spiritual point of view, they were the synagogue of Satan. Strong terms are employed to inspire His people with horror at hypocrisy and formality. 2. An intimation of approaching trials. "Behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison." Human agents were employed to seize upon some of the Christians in Smyrna, and to cast them into prison, but it was at the instigation of the devil. If this rendered their guilt less, in reference to that particular transaction, it rendered it greater in having sold themselves into the hands of such a master. It is one great proof that Christianity is the true religion, that against this alone the demon of persecution has been excited. It is the only religion that Satan cannot turn to his own interests, the only kingdom that is opposed to his own, and consequently against this his whole rage and energies are employed. 3. Exhortations to unwavering fidelity, in reference to this approaching season of persecution. One relates to its anticipation, and another to its endurance. First, "Fear not." When such an exhortation is given by God to man, who has reason to fear everything from Him, it implies the entire work of reconciliation. It is a promise also of all the support and consolation which the approaching trial may demand. The other admonition is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." This intimates, that for the profession of the truth they would be exposed to death. They are not to temporise or prevaricate through fear, but continue steadfast and inflexible unto death. III. THE GENERAL APPLICATION of the address to this particular Church. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The original word for "hurt" assists the interpretation of the whole sentence. It is a judicial term, signifying that he shall not be wrongfully adjudged to the second death, as he has been to

temporal death. He has been unjustly treated and injured in the first death, but no injury or injustice shall be done him with respect to the second death. Natural death is overcome by submission, not by resistance. When by faith in Christ we overcome the fear of it, we overcome the reality. If our faith conquers the first death, it will conquer the second. (G. Rogers.) *The words of Christ to the congregation at Smyrna* :—I. WEALTH IN POVERTY. 1. Secular wealth is of contingent value; spiritual is of absolute worth. 2. Spiritual wealth is essentially virtuous; not so secular. 3. Spiritual wealth is essentially a blessing; secular often a bane. 4. Spiritual wealth is inalienable; secular is not. 5. Spiritual wealth commands moral respect; not so secular. II. FIENDS IN RELIGION. Satan has ever had much to do with religion. Religion—not godliness—is at once his shrine and his instrument. It was religion that put to death the Son of God Himself. III. SAINTS IN PERSECUTION. 1. It was religious. 2. Severe. 3. Testing. 4. Short. IV. DUTY IN TRIAL. 1. Courage. 2. Faithfulness. 3. Perseverance. 4. Reflectiveness. V. VICTORY IN DEATH. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *The Church in great tribulation* :—I. THE TRIAL TO WHICH THIS CHURCH WAS SUBJECTED. 1. The persecution of inveterate enemies. 2. Temporal poverty. 3. The bigotry and reproach of embittered co-religionists. 4. The anticipation of future afflictions and imprisonment. (1) The nature of this future suffering. In the hands of enemies. (2) The instigator. Satan is the primary agent of all persecution. (3) The duration. Determined by God. Brief at the longest. (4) The design. The moral elevation of the pure. II. THE WEALTH BY WHICH THIS CHURCH WAS CHARACTERISED. 1. The worth of a Church cannot always be estimated by its temporal circumstances. 2. The worth of a Church cannot always be estimated by the opinions of men regarding it. 3. Moral considerations alone determine the true value of the Church. III. THE FIDELITY TO WHICH THIS CHURCH WAS EXHORTED. 1. This exhortation indicates danger. 2. This exhortation requires steadfastness. Lessons : 1. That the Church of Christ is often exposed to many trials and fierce persecutions. 2. That the Church of Christ is often persecuted by men who ought to know better. 3. That sectarian strife is the occasion of much persecution. 4. That the consolations of heaven are richly given to a tried Church. (J. S. Exell, M.A.) *Christ's message to the tempted and tried* :—"You have a passion for people who are pelted, Dan," said Sir Hugo Mallinger. "I'm sorry for them too; but so far as company goes, it's a bad ground of selection." Our Saviour has a specially tender word to say to the pelted, and He speaks it here. I. SURRENDERS THAT ENRICH; OR THE GAIN OF LOSS FOR CHRIST. We mean that which Augustine felt, when he said in speaking of his conversion, "How sweet did it at once become to me to want the sweetness of these toys! And what I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with!" What constitutes the true wealth of Churches? The number of moneyed men who are in the congregation? Nay, not so; but they become wealthy by accounting all that they possess as a solemn trust, and by employing every talent which they possess for the purpose which the Saviour had in view when He gave it to them. These Christians had not only endured the loss of all things, but they had been called upon to undergo even further ignominy, for they had been compelled to endure reviling and slander. To comfort them, calumny is noted in its relation to God. Perhaps the very virtues of these patient inoffensive people had been misrepresented. What had Christ to say about this form of iniquity? He styles it blasphemy; for Christ always calls things by their right names. Calumny against the saints is really blasphemy against God, for He has taken the comfort and good name of His people under His especial care, quite as much as He has assumed the responsibility of their eternal salvation. "It is our maxim," said Justin Martyr, "that we can suffer harm from none, unless we be convicted as doers of evil, or proved to be wicked; you may indeed slay us, but hurt us you cannot." Sublime words truly, from a man who expressed his own reasonable conviction of the consequences of his faith when he said, "I also expect to be entrapped . . . and to be affixed to the stake." We are invulnerable if we are true to our Saviour, for no weapon which is formed against us can really prosper. Our battle is chiefly won by resistance; let us but wait, and we shall wear out the energies of our enemy and of his helpers. II. STOUT HEARTS FOR STORMY TIMES: THE COURAGE THAT CONQUERS CIRCUMSTANCES. "Fear not," saith Christ, and still continue to fear not. The "unto death" is first and mainly intensive. It marks the sublime quality, and not the continuance of our faith. Although you are robbed, suffer injustice, and are cruelly slandered, yet fear not. Continue steadfastly in your duty, and be prepared to die rather than yield up what is committed unto you. Poverty, sickness,

the loss of good name, bereavement, even death itself : Christ knows them all, for He has Himself endured them, and so He says from experience, "Fear them not!" Let us say about all the hard facts and enemies of our lives what Andrew Fuller said during a crisis in the history of the Baptist Missionary Society, "We do not fear them. We will play the man and fight for the cause of our God, and Jehovah do that which pleases Him." 1. The omniscience of Christ is a ground of courage, for the author of the mischief is known. If God's enemy be the prime mover in our sorrows, we may safely anticipate especial grace to interfere upon our behalf. It is also no small comfort for us to know that the author of our misery is known to God, who will one day tread Satan under our feet. 2. And another source of holy courage is the Divine control of evil, which is seen in the fact that the suffering is limited by Divine wisdom. It is true that ten days are a dreary time while the tribulation endures, but they form, after all, a very insignificant portion of our lives. Is it not a comfort to know that there are no contingencies in our lives that Christ has not provided for, that if, for reasons which will be made clear some day, He determines that ten days' suffering is needful for us, or for others, not more than ten days will be allotted to us. We must endure all that period, but not an hour longer than He deems requisite, for Christ is the judge of our sorrows and the giver of our affliction. 3. Another motive to courage is the fact that God does always actually triumph, and that, however unwillingly, the worst does the best for those who love Him. These Christians were to be tried, and some of them would be killed. It is hard to part with life, even with all the alleviations of the gospel. But these men were likely to die amidst cruel mocking, and with none of the consolations which minister to our loved ones when they pass away from us. Christ may require even this sacrifice of our inclinations of us; at any rate, He expects that if He should demand it, that we should be ready to yield at once to His requirement. Nor should it be hard for us to do so, for death will only accomplish Christ's bidding. Let us then say to each other, as Annie Brontë said to her sister, "Take courage; take courage." And the more so because courage is no virtue in those who are blessed by the love of Christ; it is only natural. III. And He who exhorts us to be brave furnishes us with STRONG ANTIDOTES FOR SORE EVILS; THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET. 1. In the first place, we should ever keep in mind the fact that Christ has the last word in every conversation, and the completing touch in every work. "I am the First and the Last," He says. "I was the first in raising you, and I will be the last in preserving you. I began the conflict, and I will terminate the fight." A declaration also of our Lord's dignity, and a proof that He judges persons and events. 2. Another antidote to fear will be found in Christ's person and offices, which are a source of unfailing strength. Death has not made an end of Christ; even such agony as He endured has not changed Him. He knows therefore from His own experience what the pangs of death are. "Died He, or in Him did death die?" Augustine asks. "What a death that gave death its deathblow!" And to the victor who will seek to conquer his own timidity, and will persevere to the end, the Saviour promises a crown of life. Kingly life, the dignities and happiness of heaven, are here promised to those who will be faithful. As against the loss of a life which is burdened with care at the best, and is often embittered by failure and sin, our Saviour promises a better life, which is to come. Over the entrance of Thornbury Castle there is a scroll upon which is inscribed "*Doresenevant*." This is an old French word which signifies "Henceforward," or "Hereafter." The builder was a Duke of Buckingham, who thus expressed his sanguine hopes with regard to the English crown. We may truly say "Hereafter," and the watchword should nerve us to endure the period of waiting for our kingdom, because one day we too shall be crowned. (*J. J. Ellis*.) **The First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive.**—*Christ's designation of Himself*:—What is meant by Christ being "the First and the Last"? The words are quoted from Isa. xlv. 6, 7, where God supports His claim as the declarer of truth on the fact that He was before all, and continues through all, standing alone as acquainted with all. When our Lord uses this phrase for Himself, He makes Himself the Eternal Jehovah. He uses a title which belongs only to the Most High God. And yet in close connection with the title which best marks His Deity is the title which best marks His humanity—"which was dead, and lived again." The Cross is seen on the background of the Divine. The suffering Man is one with the saving God. The two titles together form a compendium of the great salvation, and lift the mind to the contemplation of the grand scheme of the Divine mercy and love, as against any earthly trial of whatever kind. (*H. Crosby*.) But thou art rich.—*Spiritual*

riches :—It often happens that people do not know how rich they are. So it appears to have been with the Smyrnan Church. Let us consider some of the elements of these spiritual riches possessed by this Church with which Jesus has no fault to find. I. It was RICH IN FAITH (James ii. 5). Do you know why faith enriches its possessor? It is because he is justified by faith. There is not a more impoverishing thing than a consciousness of sin. II. This Church was RICH TOWARD GOD (Luke xii. 21). This phrase is used by our Saviour in contrast with laying up treasure for one's self. Wealth, when well gotten, is a trust from God, and ought to be administered for Him. But this Church was not rich, and had no opportunities to speak of laying the treasures of earth upon God's altar; and yet it was rich toward God; for the principle of complete consecration was well honoured in the observance of the brethren. III. This Church was "RICH IN GOOD WORKS" (1 Tim. vi. 18). Good works are the current coin of the heavenly kingdom; happy he who has his spiritual coffers full of them. And as all the coin of the realm must have its origin in the royal mint, so all good works to be genuine must spring from faith in God, and bear the image and superscription of King Jesus. IV. THE POWER OF MAKING OTHERS RICH was another source of spiritual wealth to this Church. He is truly wealthy who can describe himself, like Paul, "as poor, yet making many rich." (*J. Cameron.*) *The riches of the poor.* I. THE POOR ARE RICH; FOR THEY HAVE THE MOST VALUABLE POSSESSIONS AND ENJOYMENTS OF THE RICH, AND WANT ONLY THOSE WHICH ARE OF LESS VALUE. Gaiety and cheerfulness, in infancy and childhood, gladden the offspring of the peasant as well as the offspring of the prince. The sleep of the labouring man is as sweet as his who has acquired or inherited the largest fortune. The mind of the servant may be more contented and serene than that of the master. II. MANY OF THE POOR, YEA, ALL OF THEM WHO HAVE OBTAINED PRECIOUS FAITH, EVEN IN THIS LIFE POSSESS AND ENJOY THE BEST RICHES. 1. They possess a title and claim to all things. To Jesus, the heir of all things, they are united by faith and love. 2. They possess an interest in Him who is the fountain of all blessedness and the possessor of heaven and earth. Be it so that they cannot say this house or these lands are ours, they have ground to say, this God is our God for ever and ever. 3. They have a charter which cannot be revoked; and which secures their possession of all that is good for them (2 Pet. i. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Psa. xxxiv. 10, lxxxiv. 11, cxxxii. 15; Isa. liv. 17; Zech. ix. 8; 1 Cor. x. 14). 4. True Christians, through the operations of the Spirit of Christ and the influence of faith purifying the heart, are enriched with a temper of mind, and with dispositions which are the seeds of true happiness. Religion consecrates the understanding, the will, and the affections, to the best and noblest purposes; and opens the purest sources of transporting delight. 5. True Christians are rich in the well-grounded prospect of a state beyond the grave, where every source of sorrow shall be dried up and every spring of joy opened. III. THE POOR ARE RICH, FOR THEY HAVE THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING AND SECURING THE MOST SUBSTANTIAL AND DURABLE RICHES. They have large, free, and generous offers of all that is needful to make them happy. To the poor the gospel is preached; and thus a price is put into their hands to get wisdom. (*John Erskine, D.D.*) *Poor but pure* :—Sweet-smelling Smyrna, the poorest but purest of the seven. (*J. Trapp.*) *Poor and rich* :—There are both poor rich-men and rich poor-men in God's sight. (*Abp. Trench.*) *Poor yet rich* :—There is no proportion between wealth and happiness nor between wealth and nobleness. The fairest life that ever lived on earth was that of a poor man, and with all its beauty it moved within the limit of narrow resources. The loveliest blossoms do not grow on plants that plunge their greedy roots into the fattest soil. A little light earth in the crack of a hard rock will do. We need enough for the physical being to root itself in; we need no more. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer*.—*Suffering Christians* :—I. SUFFERING IS THE LOT OF CHRISTIANS IN THIS WORLD. No situation in life, however desirable—no circumstances, however auspicious—no degree of consistency and utility of moral character, can exempt any individual from trouble and sorrow. Perfect freedom from trouble and sorrow will never be experienced on this side the kingdom of glory. II. MANY OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRISTIANS ARE PRODUCED BY THE AGENCY OF SATAN. Persecutors of the Lord's people are agents of the devil, and if left under his power, they will eternally share with him in punishment. That which the devil effects in malice, with a view to their ruin, the Saviour permits in mercy, with a view to their advantage. The faith and the patience of suffering saints confound Satan, encourage the Church, and glorify Christ. The time when Christians are to be

tried, and also the nature, and the degree, and the duration of their trials, are wisely and mercifully determined by the Redeemer. III. CHRISTIANS HAVE NO CAUSE TO FEAR IN THE PROSPECT OF SUFFERINGS. IV. CHRISTIANS ARE ENCOURAGED TO FIDELITY BY THE PROMISE OF FINAL VICTORY AND ETERNAL FELICITY. (*J. Hyatt.*) *Sin and suffering*:—Take more pains to keep yourselves from sin than from suffering. (*T. Brooks.*) *Trial and strength proportionate*:—God sees fit to try us all. When you are going through some large works, you will see a crane or teagle on which are such words as these, "To lift five tons," and so on. Now, nobody would expect to weigh ten tons on a teagle which is capable of sustaining only five. Neither will God permit you to be tried beyond your capacity. (*W. Birch.*) *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*—*An appeal with promise*:—I. There is recognition in this message of MAN'S UNIQUE PLACE AND POWER IN GOD'S CREATION. That the crowned Christ should speak to man at all from His throne above suggests human dignity. But the inference is enlarged and certified when we consider the character of the speech. Not to the grandest of His countless worlds does God say, "Be thou faithful." He speaks, and it is done. Everything yields to His touch, takes fashion from His will, obeys with precision His impulse. But not as to His works does God relate Himself to men. With them He reasons and pleads, for them He sacrifices and waits. The difference is neither accidental nor arbitrary. We are God's children, not His creatures, nor merely His subjects. Hence in His dealings with men the Creator becomes the Father, the Sovereign the Saviour, the Supreme Authority the most impassioned Reasoner. Higher than the angels, and centred in the thought of eternity, man is God's child, God's care, God's desire. If this account of us adds value and dignity to human life, it confers a more solemn responsibility and calls for a worthier and more constant recognition. The redemption of life, whether among rich or poor, can find its impetus in no lower motive than a recognition of man's sacredness as a son of God and a child of eternity. Only as we see each other in the light of God can we live together in relations of perfect justice and peace. When the divinity of every man has been realised through the humanity of the God-Man, life will reach its true grandeur and simplicity. Alike upon individual character and upon the social organism the effect will be as of a new creation. The vices which have flourished upon a degraded conception of human nature, the wrongs which have grown up on the basis of mere political and economic relations, will wither away in the atmosphere of diviner thought—old things shall pass away, behold, all things will become new! And it is religion—the religion of Jesus the Christ—which alone is adequate, alike by its revelation of God and its consequent doctrine of man, to elevate thought, to humanise motive, to deify life. II. The form into which our text is cast is not without significance. It is a SIMPLE EXHORTATION COUPLED WITH AN ATTRACTIVE PROMISE. "Be thou faithful" is not a lecture, but an appeal, and it is addressed to the latent energies of our emotional nature. The Scriptures are full of similar exhortations, and the implication clearly is that knowledge is not a self-acting motor, that man is not a self-impelling power. He requires to be aroused from slumber, to be stirred into activity, to be moved as well as taught. Religion takes note of that necessity. It is more than truth: it is impulse. Bringing to man's aid a new world of motives, it completes its teaching by persuasion and appeal. To our gospel man appears not as a poor ignoramus groping his way to more knowledge in order to nobler life, but as a wayward sinner needing to be aroused, forgiven, assisted. He is wrongheaded because wronghearted. It is in view of this condition that the gospel makes its appeal to each one of us. Bringing into our impoverished life a new and glorious world of knowledge, and offering for our acceptance resources of power not derivable from ourselves, it directs its penetrative appeals to the arousing of holy desire and purpose in our hearts. It is a reiterated and urgent invitation to men who know they are wrong, but who are slow to seek and strive after the right. Its characteristic words are "come," "look," "believe," "take," "follow," "hold fast," "be faithful." And until we make personal response to these calls we stand in a false relation to the Christ and His Gospel. III. In the spiritual order of life SOMETHING COMES BEFORE FAITHFULNESS. "Be thou faithful" suggests an antecedent vow or covenant to which allegiance is urged. Conversion goes before consecration, and both before faithfulness. The text has no message for a man until he has taken the first of these steps. Have you yet taken it? One point, touching the matter, requires to be re-emphasised. The new life does not grow, as plants grow, by mere unconscious absorption of vital elements. And the reason is because men are not plants, but free intelligences, who are here for the very purpose of exercising their freedom and

determining their own destiny. An act of decision is therefore of the very essence of the problem involved in human liberty and Divine grace. But it must be there in every life. Free men, who are here for the purpose of using their liberty, must and do make choice. Life's issues are not determined by hap or accident. Every man's destiny awaits his own decision. All that God can do He has done. The issues depend now upon us. We are surrounded with helps to the fulfilment of life's true issues. Have we made our decision? Are we intelligently and heartily on the Lord's side? That is the supreme question. Until it is answered we have done our duty neither to Christ nor to ourselves. We cannot be Christ's men without knowing it. May God give us grace to face that question—and that question only—till we have reached a definite decision and made a personal surrender! IV. But while the text recalls the antecedent necessity of decision, it throws an equal emphasis upon THE DUTY OF CONTINUANCE. Here it speaks to men and women who have taken a stand in respect of Christian faith and service. It is a call to that loftiest and most difficult duty of daily constancy in effort and devotion. Constancy is a finer discipline than ecstasy. Faithfulness is more and better than originality. "Go on," Christ seems to say; "do not fret as though you were forgotten, but endure as those who will be surely rewarded: look not down and around at the difficulties of your lot, but look on and up to the powers and issues of your discipleship: be not dismayed at the variations of feeling, but stand loyal to the resolutions of obedience: Heaven is around you, God is above and within—be not deceived by the scepticism of the eye, but informed by the vision of faith, and your victory will be your reward." The quiet and faithful worker, who undertakes a task and keeps at it with noble pertinacity, may not be so prominent, but is incomparably more fruitful in the Christian Church. Restless activity may only be busy idleness. Emotion is not obedience. "Be thou faithful," and thou shalt be peaceful and strong. V. The text, so full of wise counsel, closes with a PROMISE: "I will give thee a crown of life." The promise points far forward to that blessed day when we shall stand among the victors on the other side of death. Life, life full and strong and perfect, shall then be ours. We can only dimly anticipate the glory of such a crown. Now and again we seem to get glimpses of it, but the glory is swiftly hidden lest it should blind us to earth and time and duty. But behind the cloud of years and beyond the horizon of discipline this promise clearly points to a full and perfect life. Faithfulness is ever winning and ever wearing the crown. Life is every day putting on a new crown. The judgment seat of God is set every morning, and His rewards are bestowed upon the faithful soul. What life, what love, what joy, does God give day by day to men who live simple, sincere, unselfish, pious lives! The best is kept in store, but brief foretastes are granted while we suffer and strive. (*Charles A. Berry.*) *The law of fidelity and its Divine reward:*—I. THE LAW OF FIDELITY. 1. Fidelity is a virtue of universally acknowledged importance and worth. 2. Fidelity is a social virtue based upon the universal law of love. 3. Fidelity is a duty man, as man, owes to his Creator. 4. The degree of love is the measure of fidelity. 5. Fidelity to Christ involves fidelity to the great truths of the Cross. 6. Fidelity to the Cross involves fealty to every true friend of the Cross. 7. Faithfulness to Christ involves continued and life-long fidelity. II. THE DIVINE REWARD OF THIS LIFE-LONG FIDELITY. Those who are faithful unto death will be crowned with life—that is to say, life in its sublime and subliming form. Our life here is more death than life. Here we have the minimum of bliss, there the maximum of happiness; here the minimum of power, there the maximum of might. (*William McKay.*) *Christian faithfulness:*—I. THE NATURE of the appeal: "Be faithful." Faithfulness is—(1) Due to Christ; (2) Possible to all; (3) All-pervasive. II. THE RANGE of the appeal: "Be thou faithful unto death." Faith should be—(1) Superior to circumstances—"Tribulation"; "Death." (2) Independent of others: "thou." (3) Of life-long duration: "unto death." III. THE ENFORCEMENT of the appeal: "I will give thee," &c. There is another sphere of life, with reality and splendour of reward, and the reward itself will be—(1) Appropriate, in character; Faithfulness crowned; "death"—"life." (2) Personal, in enjoyment: "I will give thee." (3) Certain, in attainment; because (a) gratuitous in its vouchsafement: "give;" and (b) definite in its promise: "I will." (*Homilist.*) *Fidelity to Christ enforced:*—I. A SOLEMN EXHORTATION. 1. Christians are urged to fidelity in their professions of personal attachment to the Saviour. 2. The exhortation calls on Christians to be faithful in their adherence to all the doctrines of Revelation. 3. To be faithful in maintaining the royal authority of the Saviour, and His Headship over His Church. 4. To be faithful in paying your solemn vows. II. THE GRACIOUS ASSURANCE. 1.

The gift—"A crown of life." A crown is the highest object of earthly ambition and the possession of it the loftiest pinnacle of worldly glory—to obtain it, no toils, struggles, or sacrifices are deemed too great. But between this crown of life and all the glory and honour of this earth there is no comparison. It is a crown of life, and this is indicative of the pure, lofty, and endless enjoyments to which it introduces. 2. The glorious giver. It is Christ who is to bestow the crown of life. Those who are to wear it have not won it by their own prowess, obtained it by their own merit, or inherited it by their natural birth. It is given freely by Him by whose blood it was secured, and by whose munificence it is bestowed. 3. The solemn period at which this crown shall be bestowed. The text directs forward our expectations to the solemn period of dissolution when this reward shall be obtained. This advantage is peculiar to Christianity. At death the conquering hero lays down his crown, and leaves all his worldly glory behind him. But at death the Christian triumphs. Then he puts off his armour and receives his crown. His conflicts terminate, his enemies are for ever defeated, and death is swallowed up in victory. (*A. Harvey.*) *Faithful unto death*:—The original means not simply, "Be thou," but rather, "Become thou"; as showing that it is a thing which we are not; but which continually we must, from time to time, make ourselves, by a holy effort. "Become thou faithful unto death." To be "faithful" is to be "full of faith," i.e., full of the realisation of things unseen. For the only way to secure "faithfulness" in anything is to carry with us a constant presence and a deep sense of the invisible. And you must be careful that you have caught the exact sense of "unto death." It relates not so much to the measure of the duration of the time as to the degree of the power of the endurance—"to the death-point." You will set about your endeavour to be "faithful," with the greater pleasantness and the more assurance of success if you carry with you the recollection that it was the characterising grace of our Master. St. Paul has drawn for us the striking comparison that Moses indeed was "faithful in all His house," but that the glory of the faithfulness of Christ exceeded the glory of the faithfulness of Moses as much as the builder of a house is better than the building. Of the many voices with which your motto will speak to you, let me now anticipate only a very few. And, first, your "faithfulness" to God. For remember that no other relation can ever be quite right while that is wrong. The upward will rule all the rest. First, as an act of justice, take honouring views of the Father. Never question that you are His child—though the unworthiest; and believe God's love, even when you have grieved Him to the very quick, and when He is chastening you the most sorely. Secondly, keep short accounts with God. Never leave more than a day's debt to God unsettled. Thirdly, be "faithful" to God in telling Him everything. Be "faithful" in your confidences, have no secrets, open to God the whole heart. The mortification will be severe, but you cannot be "faithful" in prayer unless the prayer be "unto death," to the death of your dearest sin. These voices let your motto speak to you in your own room. Next, be faithful to yourself. First, to your pledges in baptism, in confirmation, in the Lord's Supper, in many a sorrow. Deal honourably with your own pledges, acknowledging the responsibility and facing the duty. And, secondly, to your conscience. A man will never go very far wrong who really listens to and follows his conscience. Thirdly, be "faithful" to your Church. Faults, no doubt, our Church has. There has been too much admixture with the world since that day when she came pure out of her Master's hand that she should not have contracted some earthly alloy. But she is the fairest Church upon earth and the freest from blemish, the purest thing out of heaven. And she is the Church of your fathers, of your baptism, of the holiest associations of your life, and of your best hours. Be "faithful" to her. Follow her teaching. Obey her laws. Love her services. Reverence her simplicity. Bow to her judgments. Strive for her increase. Pray for her unity. It would be far too large a field if I were to attempt to enter now, in any detail, upon the "faithfulness" of daily duties. Whatever you have to do, do not be so anxious to do it well, cleverly, effectually, as to do it "faithfully." The rest may not be in your power—this is. Every man can be "faithful." Your chief danger will be, not that you be unfaithful one day or two, but that you will become weary and grow slack. Therefore read the precept with emphasis, day after day, week after week, all the year round—"faithful unto death." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Christian faithfulness and its reward*:—I. CHRISTIAN FAITHFULNESS implies—1. Sincerity, in opposition to hypocrisy. 2. Fidelity, in opposition to fraud or peculation. 3. Diligence, in

opposition to indolence. 4. Courage in the time of danger or suffering. 5. Perseverance. II. THE REWARD OF CHRISTIAN FAITHFULNESS. 1. The firstfruits of that glorious harvest, which is included in the future reward, are enjoyed upon earth. (1) There is a present reward in the enjoyment of the testimony of a good conscience. (2) The consciousness of the approbation of God is worth a thousand worlds to a man in the present life. (3) And there is, then, the great luxury of doing good, relieving misery. 2. The Lord not only gives us grace and strength and support and comfort in our work, but He has reserved for us "a crown of life." (*T. Entwistle.*) *Faithful unto death*:—I. A GREAT TRUST. II. A SOLEMN INJUNCTION CONCERNING THIS TRUST. 1. Be serious that you may be faithful. From the Christian standpoint what a thing is life! What solemn mystery broods over it! What passionate interests it holds! If we consider all this we cannot be frivolous. 2. Be firm that you may be faithful. A great part of practical faithfulness consists in resistance. 3. Be ready that you may be faithful. Say "Yes" before your fears have time to shape "No." Say "No" before your inclinations have time to whisper "Yes." Stand out declared, before friends or enemies have cause to think you are yielding to the point where the assault is made. 4. Be tender, gracious, and loving, that you may be faithful. The Master whom we serve is the Saviour, whose pity never sleeps. Thus in the Christian faithfulness there is a combination of things which seem opposite—hardness like that of the adamant, and softness like that of the air. 5. Be patient, that you may be faithful. III. A DECISIVE DAY. It is the day of death. "Be thou faithful unto death." Better is this end of life than the beginning. IV. A GREAT REWARD. "I will give thee a crown of life." (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The duty and the reward of Christian fidelity*:—I. THE COMMAND. 1. Christian faithfulness relates to the testimony God has given in His Word. Other knowledge may be useful, but this is the direct communication from God, acquainting us with His rich compassion towards us in not sparing His own Son. This system of revealed truth we are to make the subject of habitual study and the source of our chief consolation—it is to be the director of our conduct. Fidelity to the truth of God requires that we make an open, though an humble, confession of it. To this, its intrinsic excellence, its vital importance, its adaptation to all the wants and miseries of men, entitle it. 2. Christian fidelity relates to the claims of the Saviour to our obedience. His benignity and excellence render Him worthy of the love and homage of all created beings; but He has won to Himself a title to the gratitude and obedience of mankind, by assuming the character of Redeemer, by suffering as their Surety. When the enemy would persuade us to turn away from Him, when temptation would lure us away from the Captain of our salvation; when the indolence and remissness to spiritual exercises, natural to man, would often be a hindrance to our fidelity, let us hear His animating voice, saying, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." 3. We are to be faithful in the exercise and in the improvement of the talents entrusted to our charge. 4. We are to be faithful in exercising the courage which the Christian warfare requires. The allusion in the text is to military life, and to the obedience due from a soldier to his general, leader, and commander. He must never, through treachery or cowardice, desert the banner he has sworn to defend, nor refuse to follow the order of his general. 5. Christian fidelity is to be continued unto death. II. THE PROMISE OF GRACIOUS REWARD EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT—"I will give thee a crown of life." (*D. Dewar, D.D.*) *Christian faithfulness*:—I. A PERSONAL FAITHFULNESS. "Thou." 1. Individual attention to, and steadfastness in, our own particular work. The mode and circumstances of the testimony different. Philip's part different from Stephen's, Paul's from Peter's, and so forth. But individual faithfulness the common characteristic of all true witnesses. 2. Personal also in respect of the one object of faith. He served not merely "a cause," but the Lord, his own loved and adored Master in heaven. II. A PERMANENT FAITHFULNESS. The faith is persistent unto the end, through all sufferings, opposition, temptation, death itself. Not "fits and starts," but a steady, onward course (2 Tim. iv. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 58). III. A PERFECTED FAITHFULNESS. The faithfulness is perfected at last, and this perfection is "the crown of life." (*Bp. W. S. Smith.*) *Christian fidelity and its reward*:—I. CHRISTIAN FIDELITY. 1. The Christian must be faithful to the claim of the Supreme Being upon the devotion of his soul and the service of his life. 2. The Christian must be faithful to the requirements of truth and to the inner experiences and convictions of the soul. 3. The Christian must be faithful to the needs of men around him, and their relation to the redemptive mission of Christ. 4. The

Christian must be faithful notwithstanding the dangers of the Christian life. II. ITS REWARD. 1. The reward of Christian fidelity will be ennobling in its character. 2. The reward of Christian fidelity will be given by Christ. Lessons: 1. Are we faithful to the claims of God? 2. The solemn motive to fidelity. 3. The glorious reward of fidelity. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Cross and crown*:—I. CHRISTIAN CONSECRATION. 1. It must be thorough—"Faithful." This implies—(1) Adverse circumstances. (2) Strong conviction. (3) Resolute will. (4) Persevering effort. (5) Dauntless courage. 2. It must be personal—"Thou." Each one has his own power, sphere, and responsibility for service. 3. It must be life-long. Necessary for—(1) Thorough discipline of character. (2) Required usefulness to society. (3) Complete devotedness to God. II. CHRISTIAN COMPENSATION. 1. Glorious—"Crown." 2. Enduring—"Life." Eternal—real "life" to enjoy it. 3. Certain—"Will." 4. Personal—"Thee." 5. Unmeritorious—"Give." 6. Divinely bestowed—"I." Conclusion: 1. Effort, not enjoyment, is the object in life. 2. Be true to Christ above all others. 3. Jesus rewards effort, not prosperity. 4. Death the great transformation scene. Cross to crown. 5. Heaven a world of conquerors. All crowned. 6. Draw upon future glories to encourage in present trials. (*B. D. Johns.*) *A crown of life*:—The finest heroism is that of ordinary life. Steadfastness in hard times is a far nobler manifestation of moral strength than the most dashing valour which souls display under the joyous impulse of great success. For instance, the greatness of General Washington is shown by the magnificent hopefulness and steadiness with which he held his poor little army together through long months of retreat and suffering, far more than by his consummate ability in the guidance of actual battle. Many persons after they have done well in an enterprise think they have received no reward unless they have obtained fame or riches. Yet comparatively few do receive such rewards as these, and we hear a continual outcry that justice does not rule between God and man. Is it just that the world's multitude of sufferers includes not merely the idle, inefficient, and vicious, but in large numbers those to whom poverty clings in spite of their devoted labours, and those who are kept down by constant illness or other unavoidable weakness? Why has God denied to all the multitudes of the unfortunate all adequate reward to their efforts? The sufficient answer to these doubting questions is the pointing out of the fact that those who ask them have set up a wrong standard of rewards, and so have overlooked the most important things God is doing in human souls. Who told you, my doubting friend, that the only just reward for writing a noble book is immediate fame, or that wealth ought always to be showered upon the most diligent workers? God is not a magnified committee of award, who examines the records of earth, and metes out to men as rewards for good conduct the things they most desire to possess. Abundant resources, delightful pleasures, gratifying honours, enrich some lives and fail to reach others by causes that are not intended, in my belief, to make of them arbitrary rewards. They fall to the share of evil men and good alike, and are missed by myriads of the most virtuous persons. Divine rewards must therefore be a different sort of thing; and, inasmuch as God can do no wrong, we ought to be able to discover His marks of approval in every life we know to be a noble one. This search inevitably becomes a religious one. Our trust in God is our chief guide; and by this we are led to see that the deepening of life itself is the Divine reward to all excellent deeds or hopes. Jesus gave the noblest utterance to His mission when He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." They who are faithful, pure in heart, noble, do receive at once more abundant life; and life is but one thing before or after death. There is something which no evil heart can enjoy, but which no righteous soul ever for an instant fails to receive as the immediate reward of his good qualities. That gracious reward is life with its uncounted possibilities, to be your deepest joy at the present time and your eternal field for high surprise. The ancient Greeks gave a crown of wild olive to the victors in their athletic or poetic contests, and the modern world gives crowns of wealth and conspicuous leadership to those who win in its competitions. But there is a lovelier crown than these. The many souls that seem to lose in their competitions with others are in reality gaining much of permanent value while they strive with noble aims. To all who work thus, whether they seem to win or not, there is given life as a crown. Be faithful unto death; and you receive that crown—simply life. The hero makes his greatest sacrifice at the place of perilous duty, loses all his joys and treasures because honour bids him die, only to awake and find that life is still his, but brighter, dearer, than ever,

because now ennobled by his faithful heroism. Once a mere existence full of mingled joy and sorrow, life has now been by his own act transformed into a crown, a reward sufficient for all goodness. It may well be that heaven is simply the discovery by an immortal soul of the Divine joy it is to be alive. If so, then, surely, life can be transformed into a crown, a measureless joy, at any moment by any sterling act of worthiness in the midst of the trials that make goodness difficult. To be faithful unto death is required but once of any man; but to be faithful up to the full requirement of every situation is demanded of us all at every moment, so that we can at any instant discover the real sublimity of this life of ours. Life may seem nothing rare to one who idly, selfishly, squanders its precious hours; but to every diligent man life is a treasure beyond estimation, and such natures find in the opportunities of each new day the ample reward for faithfulness in the day before. The true scholar's reward does not lie in the fame he may or may not receive for his book, nor in the financial returns it secures. His joy is in the doing of the work itself, in the eager search for truth, in the knowledge he is acquiring, in the actual labour of his literary art. The artist Turner cared so little for public praise and for the selling of his famous works, that when he died there were in his possession hundreds of his paintings, which by a little worldly wisdom he might have turned into gold. His joy was in the art itself, in the painting of pictures; that is, in life rather than in common rewards. Life was his crown, as is that of every worker who honours his occupation. The Divineness of this crown of life is made evident by its universality. Every good deed, every pure thought, broadens into finer life. If any man of an earnest mind understands what earnestness is worth, he has already the one Divine reward of earnestness, and need not care to be popularly known as an example of zeal. See life in this light, and, so far as you are concerned, the sting is taken away from all your failures and difficulties. The deepening, broadening, enriching, of your nature is your reward for your faithfulness through your long years of toil, hardship, loss, and grief. We know that restricted resources call out a man's own mental resources, and that a Robinson Crusoe with only a jack-knife to depend upon accomplishes more with it than another can with a whole kit of tools. We know that the gravest anxieties of business or private life give rise to our firmest courage, our grandest moral strength. We know how the trials and bitter, searching things of life take hold of careless youths and silly girls, and change their mood from vanity to beauty and strength, as the flames that burn out the iron's impurities and give forth the royal steel. In all such moral developments we see the gift of larger life coming to those that have earned it by desert; and, what is of most immediate interest to us, we see it coming without weary delay while yet the fierce struggle goes on. The most significant thing in the matter is that the crown of life—that is, life in its aspect of moral success and self-reliance—does not come to any one class of men more than to others. It comes in the very midst of anxiety, poverty, and physical weakness; and it blossoms forth also in souls that have easier careers. The only places where it does not appear are the wastes of vice and selfishness. No wicked person can know the depths of life until he changes his course, and begins by moral struggle to develop his soul. (*C. E. St. John.*)

The crown of life:—A crown without cares, co-rivals, envy, end. (*J. Trapp.*)

A crown for the faithful:—I. CHRIST'S CHARGE TO ALL HIS FOLLOWERS. 1. "Be faithful" to your soul, in seeking its prosperity. 2. "Be faithful" to Christ, in your profession of His name. 3. "Be faithful" to the gospel, in attachment to its doctrines. The gospel is the legacy of Christ to all His followers; dearer to us ought it to be than liberty or life. 4. "Be faithful" to the world, in your interest for its conversion. You are "the salt," to preserve the world from putrefaction; you are the cities which, for unity, beauty, and security, are to be admired as patterns; you are lights, to "shine before men, that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven." 5. "Be thou faithful unto death." This faithfulness is to continue, then, during life; there is to be no cessation. II. THE GLORIOUS REWARD HE GIVES TO ALL WHO OBEY IT. 1. Its nature. This "crown" is to set forth the unspeakable glories of the upper world by objects that are familiar to our senses. Is a crown, for instance, emblematic of royalty? This happiness, then, is to be a residence with the King of kings. He shall rule, and you shall reign. Is a crown symbolic of victory? There we shall be conquerors—"more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Many, like Nelson, conquer, but die in the conflict—do not live to enjoy their conquest; but you are led in triumph to the obtaining of the conquest by your great Master. 2. Its superiority. It is "a crown of life."

Four things constitute life—that is, happiness—on earth: health, plenty, friendship, knowledge. These are reserved in perfection for paradise. 3. Its bestowal. It is a gift of grace. Man's merit did not buy this glory. Grace first brings the mind into the way, grace strengthens the soul to persevere, and grace puts the crown of glory upon the head. 4. Its certainty. Every one that cleaves to Him, every one that serves Him, every one that loves Him, shall have this crown. There is no venture here, no speculation here; the virtue of the atonement, the oath of God, the experience of all His children, the dying testimony of those who have passed away to that far better world, all confirm the truth—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Conclusion: 1. Since so much depends on faithfulness to Christ, diligently use those means which are sanctified to preserve it. One of the first means to obtain these blessings is, crave Divine keeping. He is well kept whom God keeps, and he only. 2. Preserve intimacy with Jesus Christ. Unfaithfulness commences in absence. 3. And shall I say, avoid the company of Christ's enemies? 4. And choose decided friends of Christ as your companions: not half-hearted persons, that you cannot tell whether there is any religion in or no. (*J. Sherman.*)

Faithfulness :—A faithful person you can always trust; he is ever the same, behind your back as before your face. There are three things about faithfulness which show how important it is, and how earnestly we should learn and practise it. I. It is so **USEFUL**. Look at the mariner's compass. It is a small, flat piece of steel, called a needle. This is placed on the fine point of a piece of iron, which is fastened in an upright position inside of a little box. It is free to turn in any direction; but God has given that little needle the power of always turning to the north. We do not know what this power in the needle is which makes it turn to the north. People call it magnetism. No one can tell what this magnetism is, but we believe in it. The wonderful power of this little needle makes it one of the most useful things in the world. When sailors go to sea, and lose sight of land, this needle is all they have to depend upon to guide them across the trackless ocean. There are hundreds of vessels out at sea now that could never find their way back to port if it were not for the strange power of this needle. And faithfulness is to us just what the magnetism of that needle is to the compass. It guides us to usefulness. Faithfulness will make us honest and true; it will lead us to do what we know to be right. And then we can always be trusted. II. It is so **BEAUTIFUL**. God has given us the power to delight in beautiful things; and in His great goodness God has filled the world about us with beautiful things in order that we may find pleasure in looking at them. How beautiful the sun is as it rises and sets in floods of golden glories! How beautiful is the moon as it moves through the heavens so calmly bright! How beautiful the stars are as they shine in the dark sky! And how beautiful the flowers are in all the loveliness of their varied forms and colours! We thank God for all these beautiful things because of the pleasure they give and the good they do us; and when painters make beautiful pictures, and sculptors chisel out beautiful figures in marble, we thank them too, because we love to look upon the beautiful things they make. It gives us pleasure, and does us good, to see things that are beautiful. It is a pleasing thing to see a boy or girl, a man or woman, who is trying to be faithful and do what is right. III. It is so **HONOURABLE**. The highest honour we can gain is to do that which God and good people approve, and which will lead them to love us and think well of us. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And so, when we are doing the things that faithfulness requires of us, we may be sure that we are doing honourable things. (*R. Newton, D.D.*)

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.—*The second death and how to escape it*:—I. THIS LANGUAGE IMPLIES THAT THERE IS A DEATH PRIOR TO THE SECOND HERE NAMED. The first death is severe, is penal, but is often rendered glorious by the power of the grace of God. II. THAT THE SECOND DEATH IS MORE DREADFUL THAN THE FIRST. The first death is but the taking away of the man from the scene of this world, from the activities of time; whereas the second death removes the soul eternally from the presence of God, from the joy of heaven, and casts it into the dark regions of the lost. III. THE SECOND DEATH MAY BE ESCAPED BY CONTINUED AND TRIUMPHANT MORAL GOODNESS. A pure soul will never be banished from the presence of God. His presence is immortality and spiritual delight. Lessons: 1. Let us endeavour so to live that we may escape the second death. 2. Let us remember that physical death is not the end of being; there is yet a death beyond—a death in life. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The victor's immunity from the second death*:—Two of the seven Churches—viz., Smyrna, to which our text is addressed, and Philadelphia—

offered nothing, to the pure eyes of Christ, that needed rebuke. The same two, and these only, were warned to expect persecution. The higher the tone of Christian life in the Church the more likely it is to attract dislike, and, if circumstances permit, hostility. Hence the whole gist of this letter is to encourage to steadfastness. That purpose determined at once the aspect of Christ which is presented in the beginning, and the aspect of future blessedness which is held forth at the close. The aspect of Christ is—"these things saith the first and last, which was dead and is alive." A fitting thought to encourage the men who were to be called upon to die for Him. I. THE CHRISTIAN MOTIVE CONTAINED IN THE VICTOR'S IMMUNITY FROM A GREAT EVIL. Now, that solemn and thrilling expression, "the second death," is peculiar to this book of the Apocalypse. The name is peculiar; the thing is common to all the New Testament writers. Here it comes with especial appropriateness, in contrast with the physical death which threatened to be inflicted upon some members of the Smyrnean Church. There is something at the back of physical death which can lay its grip upon the soul that is already separated from the body; something running on the same lines somehow, and worthy to bear that name of terror and disintegration. "The second death." What can it be? Not the cessation of conscious existence; that is never the meaning of death. The deepest meaning of death is separation from Him who is the fountain of life, and in a very deep sense is the only life of the universe. Separation from God; that is death, that touches the surface, is but a faint shadow and parable. And the second death, like a second tier of mountains, rises behind and above it, sterner and colder than the lower hills of the foreground. Like some sea-creatures, cast high and dry on the beach, and gasping out its pained being, the men that are separated from God die whilst they live, and live a living death. The second is the comparative degree of which the first is the positive. "To eat of the Tree of Life"; to have power over the nations; to rule them with a rod of iron; to blaze with the brightness of the morning star; to eat of the hidden manna: to bear the new name known only to those who receive it; to have that name confessed before the Father and His angels; to be a pillar in the Temple of the Lord; to go no more out; and to sit with Christ in His throne. These are the positive promises, along with which this barely negative one is linked, and is worthy to be linked: "He shall not be hurt of the second death." If this immunity from that fate is fit to stand in line with these glimpses of an inconceivable glory, how solemn must be the fate, and how real the danger of our falling into it! Further, note that such immunity is regarded here as the direct outcome of the victor's conduct and character. Transient deeds consolidate into permanent character. Beds of sandstone rock thousands of feet thick are the sediments dropped from vanished seas or borne down by long dried-up rivers. The actions which we often so unthinkingly perform, whatever may be the width and the permanency of their affects external to us, react upon ourselves, and tend to make our permanent bent or twist or character. The chalk cliffs of Dover are skeletons of millions upon millions of tiny organisms, and our little lives are built up by the recurrence of transient deeds which leave their permanent marks upon us. They make character, and character yonder determines position. The little life here determines the sweep of the great ones that lie yonder. The victor wears his past conduct and character, if I may so say, as a fireproof garment, and if he entered the very furnace heated seven times hotter than before there would be no smell of the fire upon him. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." II. Now, note, THE CHRISTIAN MOTIVE CONTAINED IN THE VICTOR'S RECEPTION OF A GREAT GOOD. "I will give him a crown of life." I need not remind you, I suppose, that this metaphor of "the crown" is found in other instructively various places in the New Testament. It is life considered from a special point of view that is set forth here. It is kingly life. Of course, that notion of regality and dominion as the prerogative of the redeemed and glorified servants of Jesus Christ is for ever cropping up in this book of the Revelation. And you remember how our Lord has set an example of setting it forth when He said, "I will give thee authority over ten cities." The rule over ourselves, over circumstances, the deliverance from the tyranny of the external, the deliverance from the slavery of the body and its lusts and passions, these are all included. The man that can will rightly, and can do completely as he rightly wills, that man is a king. But there is more than that. There is the participation in wondrous, and for us inconceivable, ways, in the majesty and regality of the King of kings and Lord of lords. But remember that this conception of a kingly life is to be interpreted according to Christ's own teaching of that wherein loyalty in His kingdom consists.

For heaven, as for earth, the token of dominion is service, and the use of power is beneficial. That life is a triumphant life. The crown was laid on the head of the victor in the games. If we do our work, and fight our fight down here as we ought, we shall enter into the great city not unnoticed, not unwelcomed, but with the praise of the King and the pæans of His attendants. "I will confess his name before My Father and the holy angels." That life is a festal life. Royalty, triumph, festal goodness, all fused together, are incomplete, but they are not useless symbols; may we experience their fulfilment! Hope is surely a perfectly legitimate motive to appeal to. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 12-17. *Pergamos.—Pergamum—the incomplete Church*:—Pergamum is the incomplete Church: valiant and earnest, it is oblivious of the new demand made upon it: it is indifferent to subtle inward influences, which are corrupting its teachers, and endangering the spiritual life of its members. Its earnest devotion is put in the forefront—"I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is; and thou art holding fast My name." Out of that acknowledgment comes the rebuke of their fault: they who have done so much can do more; they can repent of their laxity, be faithful amid the requirements of to-day. The Church is in danger from erroneous thinking as well as from apostasy, and faithful leaders must not trifle with that danger. "Thou hast there some that hold to the teaching of Balaam"; thou hast them, and thou retainest them. Heretics inculcating immorality are tolerated. The pastor is not doing his duty; those are being cherished whose teaching the Lord hates. The heretics are in imminent danger; the Lord will correct by judgments the Church that allows itself to be careless. "Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I make war against them with the sword of My mouth." There are two or three general lessons coming out of this description: 1. The first is, that a Church cannot live on its past. The memory of Antipas was not enough for Pergamum, nor even the share of the Church in Antipas's martyr spirit and martyr crown. A revived historical consciousness is one of the most marked features in the life of to-day: it has lent new interest to our studies, and given dignity to our social sense. But it has brought dangers with it; our appreciation of the past may weaken our feeling of personal responsibility and of present needs. 2. A second lesson is, that a Church cannot live on a single virtue. If days like those of Antipas had come back, doubtless Pergamum would have been faithful as before; but as the times were different, new graces were called for. Christian character is like the tree of life which John saw in the city of God, "bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." 3. A third lesson may be read from the story of Pergamum to the Churches of to-day: earnestness is not everything in ethical and spiritual life. The easy demeanour which marked English society in the middle of this century has given place to a quickened moral intensity which is full of promise. But some ominous symptoms have also appeared. One man feels earnest, and straightway he does something eccentric; another feels earnest, and he indulges in outrageous speech; a third is reckless in conduct, pleading as his excuse when evil results follow that he was so deeply moved. Earnestness is a good foundation for a virtuous life, but it is not in itself a virtue; it may be of the temperament rather than of the character; without earnestness there is no stability, but a man may be very earnest and very defective. The special fault of Pergamum was indifference to the error of the Nicolaitans. What the error was we see clearly enough in ver. 14—Balaam "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." There was a determined effort on the part of some false teachers among the Churches in Asia at this time to break down the wise restrictions of the Council of Jerusalem, and to declare both these practices lawful, even commendable. We see the prevalence of this error in Ephesus and Thyatira as well as in Pergamum. But the development of it was not the same in the various Churches. In Thyatira it was associated with the ecstatic utterances of a woman, and a reign of false sentiment was setting in. In Pergamum, as we gather from the reference to Balaam, there was a deliberate trading on the lusts of the people. This connection of heresy with covetousness is distinctly asserted in the Second Epistle of Peter and in the Epistle of Jude. "Balaam, the son of Beor, loved the hire of wrongdoing"; the "ungodly men, who were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," "ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire." Browning has shown us, in "Mr. Sludge the Medium," how subtly covetousness and untruthfulness are

intertwined; and how the self-deceiving impostor may become the cynical trader on human weaknesses. More than one revelation of the inner life of circles—"spiritualistic," "æsthetic," "theosophic," and circles for improving the relations of the sexes—has been made in our own time, showing how pruriency and greed and contempt for the credulous may all unite under the pretence of larger intuitions and more advanced knowledge than belong to the simple believer. We can understand what may have conduced to the spread of Nicolaitan teaching among simple persons who were very far from falling under the condemnation of Balaam. (1) The teaching appealed to their curiosity, their longing after hidden knowledge, and flattered them with a promise of a freemasonry of thought. The desire to penetrate into the realities which lie behind received forms of truth, to draw clear distinctions between the abiding and the temporary in morals, is not wrong; it may come from a noble purpose and minister to human advancement. But it may also be very ignoble. If we be impelled by lust after what is forbidden, or an idle inquisitiveness concerning what is concealed, we are making ourselves ready to fall a prey to men who live upon the credulous. (2) The teaching appealed to their love of freedom; and here, too, we may make modern applications. The man of science investigates all things; nothing is regarded by him as a forbidden subject of inquiry; he knows that all knowledge may be turned to high uses; and his mind is clean. But those who are tickled by a desire to know what is secret are sure to be defiled. The democrat who wants all to be able to do their best is followed by the man who is thinking only that he has as many rights as others; the woman who knows she has powers which she can use, and demands the liberty to use them, by her who clamours for the latchkey. The one motive is as debasing as the other is noble. (3) A few words in the longer recension of Ignatius's letter to the Philadelphians furnish a third reason for the spread of Nicolaitan error. One of the characteristic doctrines of the Nicolaitans is there said to be, that pleasure was set forth as the end of the blessed life—a doctrine which might too easily beguile simple souls who believed that joy was an essential element in the nature of God and one of the fruits of the Spirit. The subtlety of this error, the baseness of applying one of the loftiest truths of the sacrificial life to sanction revelry and fornication, may well have provoked the Lord's reference to the two-edged sword here, and His words to the Church at Ephesus, "which deeds I hate." There can be nothing in common between the preachers of self-indulgence and Him who "pleased not Himself." The mystic words of promise to him that overcometh—"to him will I give of the hidden manna," &c.—have reference to the pretence of esoteric teaching by which many innocent and gracious souls are led astray. There is a wisdom which is revealed to the initiated, a higher doctrine which is ever appearing under every simple setting forth of truth. It is found by the obedient, by those who revere law, and control passion, and are content with a simple following of Christ. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." All the ways of the Lord are ways of initiation into the Divine mysteries. The "hidden manna" falls day by day about the tents of those who are content to follow Christ without ambition, in prudent simplicity and pious order. The "new name" which Christ gives to each one who overcomes is not to be known except by him who receives it; that is to say, the deepest things of personal spiritual life are not for public preaching. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *Christ's message to the timid*:—I. GOOD IN THE WORST PLACES; OR, THE RESTRAINT OF CIRCUMSTANCES. "I know where thou dwellest," says Christ, "even where Satan's seat is." I know, in the sense of making allowances for all thine hindrances, and of understanding thy peculiar needs. 1. We learn from this message how bad some places can be, and are. Satan's throne was at Pergamum, "an expression," says Andreas, "which denotes that there were more idols in Pergamum than in all Asia." There are even districts in so-called Christian England, aye, and some homes, which are simply Satan's thrones. We have, indeed, no right to thrust ourselves into any peril; but if by the call of Providence we are compelled to live where Satan's seat is, we may expect that God will do for us what He has done over and over again. 2. We learn also from this message how much some people can bear; that is, without apostasy and collapse. Possibly Antipas was some ordinary Christian who had, to the surprise of his fellow-believers, been selected for the honour of martyrdom. Whoever he was, Christ knew all about him, and dates time by his death. Do they say in heaven, In the days when So-and-so did this, or endured that? Are the martyrdoms of earth, then, so interesting to the saints who are in heaven that they constitute the calendar of the blessed? May

we so live and die that we may become conspicuous and known in the great company of the blessed! And how sweetly the Saviour here says of Antipas, "My martyr"! thus appropriating and owning the witness. Antipas belonged to the Church, it is true, but he also belonged to Christ, and his Master is not ashamed to acknowledge him. II. ALLOY OF FAITHFUL SERVICE; OR THE PERILS OF TIMIDITY. It was said of John Knox that he never feared the face of man; the fear of men had kept the Christians in Pergamum silent. Perhaps they feared the consequences of fidelity; certainly it required much courage on their part to rebuke the besetting sin of their times. What good will it do? one might inquire. Whereas they should have remembered that Christ hated this iniquity, and that therefore His servants should hate and reprove it also. Love is the soul of the gospel, but right is also its conscience and ruler. For after all, in spite of our weakness, purity is affected by testimony. Christ presents Himself to the silent as the terrible witness for the truth. Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword, which represents the combative and sin-destroying influence of truth. The promises to the victor who shall overcome his timidity are very remarkable. There are, we are told, special delights for faithful witnesses, both now and hereafter. "What have I gained after fifty years of toil for the friendless?" asked Lord Shaftesbury. And he replied to his own question, thus—"Peace of mind, and nothing else!" But peace of mind is no slight boon; it is worth risking a little ridicule for, if we may but thereby obtain a good conscience and the favour of Christ. (*J. J. Ellis.*) *The address to Pergamos*:—I. THE INTRODUCTION. We have no account of the origin of the Church in this city. The only instance in which it occurs in Scripture is in this address. Ecclesiastical history is almost entirely silent respecting it. It has been supposed that Paul, during his extensive labours in this part of the world, must have visited a place of such importance, but this is mere conjecture. Who "the angel of the Church in Pergamos" was we know not. Eusebius, who wrote at Cæsarea about three hundred years afterwards, informs us that his name was Corpus, and that he suffered martyrdom. Such, at least, was the uncertain voice of tradition at that time. The sharp sword with two edges is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." This cuts two ways. It is capable both of a direct and a back stroke. The former is for conviction, the latter for destruction. With one edge Christ fights for us, with the other against us. The Church of Pergamos is threatened that unless it repents the sharp sword with two edges will be turned against it. II. THE COMMENDATION. 1. He commends their zeal. "I know thy works." All their works for Christ were registered on high. This, however, did not render their deficiency in other duties less criminal. The most perfect performance of all Christian duties but one will not atone for the neglect of that one: it would only cause that one to stand out in a more aggravated light. 2. It is commended for its fidelity in seasons of persecution: "Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith"; and during one period in particular, "even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you." When persecution raged with greatest violence, they had maintained the greatest constancy. 3. In commending this Church, the Saviour graciously concedes the unfavourable position in which it was placed. The character given of Pergamos is that it was "the throne of Satan," and "where Satan dwells." This city exceeded all others at that time in wickedness. Let us see how this accords with the testimony of history concerning it. Its foundation, as a place of importance, was laid in treachery, avarice, and usurpation. One of Alexander's generals, who after the death of their leader sought to obtain a part of his empire by the sword, having overrun this part of Asia, deposited the rich spoils he had acquired by war in Pergamos, and entrusted them with one of his private attendants, while he rushed forward to new conquests. The servant seized the treasures, made himself master of the place, raised it to the metropolis of an independent empire; and after reigning twenty years, transmitted it to his heirs, who retained it for a hundred and fifty years afterwards. The last of these kings having no descendants, bequeathed the kingdom to the senate of Rome. This was probably done to prevent the confusion and ruin that would have ensued from the number of pretenders at his death. An usurper arose, which compelled the Romans to enforce their claim by conquest. The Roman general prevailed, by the barbarous device of poisoning the fountains and channels that supplied the city with water. Pergamos was a rich booty to the Romans, but they paid dear for their conquest. The exuberance in dress, houses, furniture, and provisions was beyond all that they had seen before. Excess of luxury was accompanied with an equal excess of vice. It was here that the

Romans were introduced to Asiatic grandeur and Asiatic voluptuousness at the same time. The simplicity of Roman manners from this period began to decline. The habits of the metropolis of the world were changed. The effeminacy of the East triumphed over the manliness of the West. The profuseness and profligacy of Asia spread through the imperial city, and over its vast empire, which all its historians agree were first imported from Pergamos. This was about a century before the Christian era. The continual intercourse with strangers at its port, from all parts of the Roman world, who came to do homage to its luxury and sensuality, inflamed still more the moral condition of Pergamos. It was just as Pergamos had arrived by these means to the height of its pride and corruption that a Christian Church arose in that city. The Saviour does not enjoin His disciples in this city to abandon it on account of its great wickedness, but commends them for remaining firm. There is no one, perhaps, who does not suppose that he could find a position less painful and discouraging than his own. There are reasons for his being called by grace, in the situation he occupies. It may be in mercy to others, as well as to himself. A testimony by this means is given before all of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. All the grace that is required to glorify the Redeemer in the sphere we occupy is ensured by the fact of His having called us in that sphere. III. THE REPROOF. "But I have a few things against thee." They are only two, but they are both of a serious nature. The one is compliance with idolatrous practices, the other the encouragement they had given to heretical sentiments. 1. The former is thus stated, "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." The professed deity of the place was *Æsculapius*, a celebrated physician, who had resided in this city. Where there is most luxury there is most disease, and most encouragement is given to the healing art. Those who were converted to Christianity in Pergamos abandoned, of course, the worship of *Æsculapius*, refused to join in its festivities, and rejected with abhorrence the flesh that had been offered on his shrine. There were some, however, at this time, in connection with the Church, who not only united in these feasts, and the consequences that ensued, but endeavoured to draw others into the same snare. By sympathising with idolatry, and exposing themselves to its demoralising influence, they threw the same kind of stumbling-block in the way of Christians as Balaam did before the children of Israel. Whoever endeavours to beguile a Christian into conformity with worldliness and sin, or by any means throws a stumbling-block before him to turn him aside, or causes him so to fall that he becomes an occasion of scandal to his profession—for that is the precise meaning of the term here employed—holds the doctrine of Balaam. 2. The other subject of reprobation in this Church is the encouragement it had given to heretical sentiments. IV. THE ADMONITION. "Repent." This single word expresses the whole requirement of God, and consequently the whole duty of man, in reference to every deviation from the right path. It is that which is first and instantly demanded, and which, if genuine, leads to all the rest. V. THE THREATENING. "Or else I will come unto thee quickly," &c. VI. THE APPLICATION. "To him that overcometh." The present is regarded as a time of severe conflict. Faith must be tried, and that only which is triumphant will be rewarded. Those who overcome in a place like Pergamos, where Satan has his throne, shall have a double reward. The one is "to eat of the hidden manna," and the other "to have a white stone given him, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Part of this description appears, at first view, to apply to the present and part to the future state. Faith in this life is its own reward. The faith by which we overcome every temptation and difficulty derives its strength from feeding on the heavenly manna. The flesh of Christ is its meat, and His blood its drink indeed. He who has this faith has the white stone of innocence in his possession, which enables him to look forward to the great day of account with joy, and fortifies him against all the accusations of his foes and of the law. The consciousness of a vital union between Christ and our souls is the great secret in the Christian's breast. It were vain to attempt to explain it to others. What to him is the evidence of consciousness, to another is but the evidence of a single testimony from human lips. Nor can grace in the heart of one infallibly detect its existence in the heart of another. Each carries the secret of his sincerity in his own breast. The whole passage, however, is intended, without doubt, to express the peculiar character of their joy in heaven. The same life which the Christian now lives by faith in the Son of God he will then live by open and sensible communion. The manna on which he feeds is the same both in earth and in heaven. In the

one case the manna descends to him, in the other he ascends to its hidden stores. This hidden manna for the supply of every desire, with an inward consciousness of the most unbounded liberty of access, constitutes the peculiar privilege to which the promise under consideration refers. (*G. Rogers.*)

*The words of Christ to the congregation at Pergamos:—*I. A TONE OF AUTHORITY.

1. Christ's truth is authoritative. 2. Christ's truth is mighty. II. A DISCRIMINATION OF CHARACTER.

1. Christ is fully acquainted with circumstances under which all moral character is formed. 2. Christ describes exactly the moral position in which the Church lived. 3. The eye of Christ recognises every part of a man's character, whether good or bad. III. A REFORMATIVE DEMAND. 1. Repentance is moral reformation. 2. Repentance is an urgent necessity. IV. A PROMISE OF BLESSEDNESS.

1. The choicest nourishment. 2. The highest distinction. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Church faithful to the truth but defective in discipline:—*I. THIS CHURCH WAS FAITHFUL IN ITS ADHERENCE TO THE TRUTH.

1. It held fast the name of Christ, and reposed a sincere confidence in Him. 2. It was faithful, notwithstanding the unfavourable circumstances in which it was placed. 3. It was faithful, notwithstanding the martyrdom of one of its prominent members. II. THIS CHURCH WAS DEFECTIVE IN THE DISCIPLINE BY WHICH IT WAS GOVERNED. 1. Defective discipline consists in allowing men of depraved conduct and unhallowed creed to enter and remain in the Church.

2. This defective discipline, unless repented of, will invite the judgment of Christ, severe and irreparable. 3. This defective discipline often mars the beauty and usefulness of an otherwise excellent Church. Lessons: 1. At all times and under all circumstances to be faithful to the truth as it is in Jesus. 2. To be anxious to sustain the Church of Christ where it is most needed brave and pure. 3. That the office-bearers in the Church should be careful as to its government. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

*A Church with a serious defect:—*I. THE WICKEDNESS OF THE CITY. 1. No slight importance is attached by the horticulturist as to the soil in which he seeks to rear his plants. Arctic zones and sandy deserts give little promise of success. 2. Is it not a matter of highest importance whether our homes are well ventilated and are free from malarial and sewer poisons? 3. In a spiritual point of view, healthful surroundings should be carefully sought. II. THE EXCELLENT FEATURES IN THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHURCH. 1. Unflinching firmness in upholding Christ's name—"Thou holdest My name," &c. 2. Unflinching firmness to Christ's cause—"Hast not denied My faith," &c. 3. Unflinching firmness under severe trials. (1) There is nothing more valuable in human character than unswerving adherence to Christ, especially when persecuted for Christ's sake. (2) Nothing more detrimental to true growth than instability. (3) The great lack of our day is moral backbone—power to stand for Christ amid the difficulties of life. III. SERIOUS DEFECTS IN THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHURCH. 1. "Thou holdest the doctrine of Balaam!" How many a young Christian has been led away from Christ and His cause by being tempted to attend an evening party, where a taste for worldly pleasure was again awakened, which ultimately destroyed all relish for spiritual things! And are there not Churches in our land, nay, in our city, who are seducing their own members away from Christ by providing for them worldly amusements, on the plea that if they do not provide amusement they will go elsewhere to enjoy them? What is this but the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel? 2. "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (ver. 15). (1) What the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was cannot be fully determined. (2) The testimony of the Fathers is that it was something akin to the doctrine of Balaam. (3) It was, at all events, that which the Lord hated. (4) And it was very evident that our Lord Jesus Christ holds pastors and Churches to a strict account for what they allow to be taught and practised by their members. IV. OUR LORD'S SOLEMN WARNING. 1. We must never lose sight of the real thing here advised. (1) To repent in Scripture language is "to change one's mind"; and this means a change which affects the life. (2) The real life is ever the expression of the mind's sentiment. (3) There can be no true conversion without repentance, as there can be no true regeneration without faith; and the only real evidence of both is a life of holiness. 2. We must never lose sight of the judicial element in Christ's dealings with His people. (1) "I will fight against them." (2) A Church of Christ cannot go counter to the expressly revealed will of its great Head without suffering for it. (3) This is no less true in respect to every individual Christian. 3. We must never lose sight of the fact that the words of Christ are the source of our weal and woe. (1) If He says, "Come ye blessed," &c., who can

rob us of the joy? (2) But if He says, "Depart from Me," who can prevent our doom? (3) "My words," says Christ, "they are spirit, and they are life." V. OUR LORD'S EARNEST COUNSEL. 1. The meaning evidently is this: "Let every one who hears this heed it!" (1) Let there be no listlessness. (2) Let there be no indifference. (3) Let there be no worldliness to neutralise the effect of the Word. 2. Oh, how much need there is to-day of this counsel! (1) While listening to the blessed Word of God how many there are who scarcely realise what is said. (2) How many who pay attention forget what they have heard! (3) And many who truly desire and pray for grace to be obedient to the Word find themselves so involved in the cares of the world that they constantly come short of their fervent desire. 3. How may it be done? (1) We must cultivate the habit of submission to God's Word. (2) We must become more familiar with God's Word. (3) We must be much in prayer while the Word is expounded. (4) And we must take the Word to ourselves. VI. OUR LORD'S MOST GRACIOUS PROMISES. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Adherence to the truth of the gospel*:—I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE TRUTH. What was the truth that the Church at Pergamos held fast? Was it worth holding? Did it refer to politics, philosophy, literature, or science? There was considerable political zeal at Pergamos; learning, too, flourished there. It was the boast of the town that it encouraged literary and scientific men. Notwithstanding this, not a word is said in this letter commendatory of their holding fast to anything save the truth. Science, learning, art, are good, but not *the* good. There is a deep significance in Christ commending the educated and scientific Pergamians for holding fast His truth. What was His truth? "My name" and "My faith." It is a saving name. "There is none other name," &c. It is a pardoning name. "In His name remission of sins shall be preached," &c. It is a royal name. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow," &c. It is a soul-collecting name. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name," &c. II. THE MEMORY OF THE MARTYRS. Martyrdom is a motive for holy truth. The martyrdoms of our land are the most radiant events in its historic page. They are the most creative things in the chronicles of our country. 1. The triumph of the spirit over the flesh, the majesty and force of mind. 2. The invincibility of the mind when it goes with truth. 3. God-sustaining grace. III. THE PERILS THAT SURROUND US. There is something beautiful in what Christ says, "I know where thou dwellest." This may be regarded—1. As the language of alarm. I know the perilous circumstances which surround thee—beware! 2. As the language of duty. "I know where thou dwellest, where Satan dwelleth," therefore be on thy guard and work earnestly for the truth. 3. As the language of encouragement. I know all thy temptations and thy difficulties; I know human life; I know what it is to live in a corrupt world. "I know where thou dwellest." If sin is around you My grace shall much more abound. IV. THE DISAPPROBATION OF CHRIST. 1. Christ first employs mild measures to correct His Church. Truth, suasion, love, example, are the mild means He ordinarily employs. 2. When His mild measures fail severer ones are employed. The severest is abandonment. No sword more terrible than this—to be abandoned by Christ is of all evils the most tremendous. V. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE FAITHFUL. The hidden manna and the white stone may mean Divine sustenance and Divine distinction. Those who are faithful to truth shall be at once sustained and honoured by God. Conclusion: Let us hold fast the name of Christ. He is everything to us. Without Him what are we? Pilgrims in an intricate and perilous desert without a guide—voyagers on a tempestuous ocean, without a chart or pilot. (*Caleb Morris.*) *I know thy works, where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.*—*God's estimate of Christian works*:—I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE A CHRISTIAN ANYWHERE. Christianity is not a thing of locality, but of character. There are plants which will bloom in some latitudes and die in others. Tropical shrubs will not flourish within Arctic circles, the Alpine flora are not found on low-lying plains. But Christianity can live wherever a man can live, for it is a thing of personal character, and as that is a matter of choice, and as a man is always what he chooses to be, he may be a Christian if he chooses in any circumstances or in any place. Obadiah kept his conscience clear even in the house of Ahab: Daniel preserved his integrity amid the corruption of the court of Babylon; and Nehemiah maintained his piety in the palace of the Persian emperor. And what is true of places is equally true of occupations. Unless a man's business be in and of itself sinful, pandering to the vices and demoralising to the characters of his fellows, he may serve Christ in any profession or trade. The Roman army was a very poor school for morals, and yet, strangely enough, all the centurions mentioned in the

New Testament seem to have been men with some good thing in their hearts towards the Lord God of Israel. Character may take some of its colouring from circumstances, but it is itself independent of them; for it is the choice of the personal will by which a man is enabled to breast circumstances, and make them subservient to his own great life-purposes. Now if it be true that a man may be a Christian anywhere, what follows? 1. This, in the first place—that we must not be prejudiced against a man because of the locality in which we find him. Test a man by what he is, rather than by where he comes from. 2. But still further, if it be true that it is possible to be a Christian anywhere, then it follows, in the second place, that we ought not to excuse ourselves for our lack of Christianity by pleading the force of circumstances, or the nature of our business, or the character of the place in which we live. II. IT IS HARDER TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN SOME PLACES THAN IN OTHERS. Thus there are households in which it seems the most natural thing in the world for a child to grow up in the beauty of holiness, and there are others in which everything like loyalty to Christ is met with opposition, and can be maintained only by a strenuous exertion. The boy brought up in a rough and godless neighbourhood has far more to contend with if he is to be a Christian than he would have residing in a different kind of locality. It is also undeniable that the surroundings of some professions and trades are more trying to those who are seeking to follow Christ than those of others. What then? If it be true, then, in the first place, the Lord knows that it is so, and He will estimate our work by our opportunity. But as another lesson from this difference in our individual circumstances, we ought to learn to be charitable in our judgment of each other. The flower in the window of the poor man's cottage may be very far from a perfect specimen of its kind; but that it is there at all is a greater marvel than it is to find a superb specimen of the same in the conservatory of the wealthy nobleman. And there may be more honour to one man for all the Christianity he has maintained in the face of great obstacles, though it be marked by some blemishes, than there is to another who has no such blemishes, but who has had no such conflict. III. THE HARDER THE PLACE IN WHICH WE ARE WE SHOULD BE THE MORE EARNEST BY PRAYER AND WATCHFULNESS TO MAINTAIN OUR CHRISTIANITY. Here, however, it is needful that we clearly comprehend what the hardest place is. It is not always that in which there is the greatest external resistance to Christianity. An avowed antagonist he meets as an antagonist; he prepared himself for the encounter, and he is rarely taken unawares; but when the ungodly meet him as friends, then he is in real peril. The world's attentions are more deadly to the Christian than its antagonisms, and it is against these that we must be especially on our guard. The Church is in the world as a boat is in the sea; it can float only by keeping above it; and if we let it become, as I may say, world-logged, it will be swamped thereby, just as surely as a boat will be that is filled with water. Another thing which makes a place hard for a Christian to maintain his loyalty in is what I may call its atmosphere. We talk loosely of the genius of a place. But every place has its own spirit, trend, tendency, or, if you will not be offended by the word, its own particular idolatry. In one the question regarding a new-comer may be, "What does he know? Has he written anything?" There we have the worship of intellect, or, as it is called by us over the way, culture. In another the inquiry is, "Who was his grandfather?" There the idolatry is that of family. In another the test is, "What is he worth?" There the idolatry is that of wealth. IV. THE GREATER THE DIFFICULTY WHICH WE OVERCOME IN THE MAINTENANCE OF OUR CHRISTIANITY, THE NOBLER WILL BE OUR REWARD. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone," &c. You see, here are three things—the stone, the name, and the secret. White stones were used for different purposes; sometimes for giving a vote of acquittal to one charged with crime; sometimes as tokens of admission to banquets; sometimes as mere expressions of love between two dear friends. The last seems to be the reference here: "I will give him a special manifestation of My love." Then there is the new name written in the stone. You know that throughout the Scriptures, whenever a new name was given by God to any one, it was always connected with some particular crisis in his personal history, and especially commemorative of that. Bearing this in mind, we shall discover in this new name something distinctly commemorative of the personal history and conflicts of the individual; and when it is added that "No man knoweth it saving he that receiveth it," we have the further peculiarity that, as referring to the most terrible struggles and experiences of the man, it is a matter of sacred confidence between him and the Lord. There are secrets between the Lord Jesus and each of His people, even now

and here. The sun belongs to all the flowers alike, and yet he is to each something that he is not to any of the rest, giving to each its own distinctive appearance, its crimson tips to the sweet mountain daisy, and its beautiful combination of colours to the fragrant violet. Just so, Christ has through my personal history and experience revealed Himself in some aspects to me that He has not shown to you, and to you in some that He has not shown to me. This new name at last will gather up into one external excellency all that personal revelation which Christ has made of Himself to each individual through His history, experience, and conflicts.

(*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) **Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith.**—*Holding fast the faith*:—I. CONSIDER THIS FACT. 1. The name of Christ is

here made to be identical with the faith of Christ. "Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith." The faith of Scripture has Christ for its centre, Christ for its circumference, and Christ for its substance. The name—that is, the person, the character, the work, the teaching of Christ—this is the faith of Christians. The great doctrines of the gospel are all intimately connected with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; they are the rays, and He is the Sun. 2. But how may the faith be denied? (1) Some deny the faith, and let go the name of Jesus by never confessing it. (2) Christ is also denied by false doctrine. (3) By unholy living. Christ

is to be obeyed as a Master, as well as to be believed as a Teacher. (4) Alas! we can deny the faith by actually forsaking it, and quitting the people of God. Some do so deliberately, and others because the charms of the world overcome them. 3. In what way may we be said to hold fast the name of Christ and the faith of Christ? (1) By the full consent of our intellect, yielding up our mind to consider and accept the things which are assuredly believed among us. (2) If we hold fast the name of Jesus, we must hold the faith in the love of it. We must store up in our affections all that our Lord teaches. (3) We also hold it fast by holding it forth in the teeth of all opposition. We must confess the faith at all proper times and seasons, and we must never hide our colours. Let us never be either ashamed or afraid. II.

Having considered the fact, LET US FURTHER ENLARGE UPON IT. What do we mean by holding fast the name of Christ? 1. We mean holding fast the Deity of that name. We believe in our Lord's real Godhead. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God." One of the names by which He is revealed to us is Immanuel. 2. We also hold fast the name of Jesus, and the faith of Jesus, as to the royalty of His name. He was born King of the Jews, and He is also "King of kings, and Lord of lords." 3. Moreover, we believe in the grandeur of that name, as being the first and the last. Oh, what blessings have come to us through Jesus Christ! 4. We hold fast the name of Christ as we believe in its saving power. 5. We hold fast this name in its immutability. III. LET ME SHOW

THE PRACTICAL PLACE OF THE NAME AND OF THE FAITH WITH US. The practical place of it is this: 1. It is our personal comfort. For all time the Lord Jesus is our heart's content. Through this blessed name and this blessed faith believers are themselves made glad and strong. It is strength for our weakness, yea, life for our death. 2. And then this name, this faith, these are our message. Our only business here below is to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" 3. He also is our Divine authority for holy work. If the spiritually sick are healed, it is His name which makes them strong. 4. This also is our power in preaching. The devil will never be cast out by any other name—let us hold it fast. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Courageous piety*:—This praise is great by reason of these circumstances. The governor of a ship and the mariners in a calm sea are not tried; it is no mastery nor praise for them to keep upright. But if in boisterous tempests and through the raging surges they can keep upright, and go safe through, it is to their great commendation. The captain in wars and his soldiers are not said to be valiant upon no assault of enemies, or for some light skirmish; but if they be set upon on every side, and compassed round about with fierce and terrible enemies and are not then abashed, but stand valiantly in the fight and give the repulse to their enemies, who doth not magnify their courage? 1. That they dwelled where Satan had his throne it

showeth first what miserable estate all men are in without Christ, even under the cruel tyrant Satan, who ruleth in their corrupt lusts and holdeth them captive to do his will. 2. This doth magnify and extol the mercy of God that would send His gospel into such a place, even almost as it were into hell, for could it be much better where Satan had his throne? 3. As we may see, it extollet the might of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only in planting His Church there, but in preserving it. For will Satan make final resistance when that is set up which casteth him down, and even in the place where he dwelleth? Men can better endure that

which they dislike if it be further from them than if it be just by them. Then that He saith thou hast kept My name and not denied My faith, it is a most excellent thing. The devil laboureth nothing more than through terror of persecution to drive men from confessing Christ. (*G. Gyfford.*) *Testimony for Christ*:—If you are the only Christian in the shop, the store, or the office where you work, a peculiar responsibility rests upon you, a responsibility which no other one shares with you. You are Christ's only witness in your place. If you do not testify there for Him, there is no other one who will do it. Miss Havergal tells of her experience in the girls' school at Düsseldorf. She went there soon after she had become a Christian and had confessed Christ. Her heart was very warm with love for her Saviour, and she was eager to speak for Him. To her amazement, however, she soon learned that among the hundred girls in the school she was the only Christian. Her first thought was one of dismay—she could not confess Christ in that great company of worldly, unchristian companions. Her gentle, sensitive heart shrank from a duty so hard. Her second thought, however, was that she could not refrain from confessing Christ. She was the only one Christ had there, and she must be faithful. "This was very bracing," she writes. "I felt I must try to walk worthy of my calling for Christ's sake. It brought a new and strong desire to bear witness for my Master. It made me more watchful and earnest than ever before, for I knew that any slip in word or deed would bring discredit on my Master." She realised that she had a mission in that school, that she was Christ's witness there, His only witness, and that she dare not fail. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *Loyalty to the last*:—In the battle of Sadowa, after the Prussians had gained the victory over the Austrians, a young Austrian officer was found mortally wounded in a wet ditch. When the Prussian ambulance officers tried to remove him he besought them with such terrible earnestness to let him lie where he was and die in peace, that at last, seeing he had but a few hours to live, they yielded to his entreaties; and there, in that wet ditch, he died. When they moved the body they discovered the reason of his earnestness to be left where he lay. Underneath the body were found hidden the colours of his regiment. Rather than they should fall into the hands of the enemy he had covered them with his dying body. The noble foe forebore to touch them. They wound them round the young hero's body, and buried him in that shroud with military honours. (*Ellice Hopkins.*) *Holding fast, κρατεῖς*, as with tooth and nail, or by main strength. (*J. Trapp.*) *Antipas, my faithful martyr, who was slain*.—*Antipas*; or, *reliable principles*:—Antipas is probably the well-known name of some elder or pastor in the Church at Pergamos, and means "against all," or "one against many." Most interesting is the study of names and their meanings. There is always some peculiarity or strength of character indicated by a name which has been given, not by parents, but by common consent, as Richard *Cœur de Lion*, or William *the Silent*. If a man inherits a good name he should never stain it, if a commonplace name he should make it honourable. Antipas made his to be honoured both on earth and in heaven. When the principles of Christianity are embraced, they make a man a very Antipas with respect to the world. He will find, oftentimes, things that will clash with conscience, and circumstances such as will demand much casuistical reasoning in the effort to reconcile the claims of God and Mammon. Sometimes in business he must set himself against evil maxims. Sometimes in the Church itself there is need for a man to act as an Antipas. If he finds non-essentials made the pretext for useless divisions, and cumbersome creeds the means for lading men's shoulders with burdens grievous to be borne, he must speak out. If he finds out some truth long overlooked, and which it would be for the welfare of the whole Church to accept, he may not keep the truth to himself. In all his struggles, anxieties, and sufferings the true Antipas may always be sure of the support of Christ. When the trial comes he finds a strength given such as he little expected. Suffering for Christ, he is permitted to enter more into the "fellowship of the mystery." What but this supported an Athanasius when alone he dared to raise a barrier against the Arian heresy on the one hand and imperial despotism on the other? What but this supported Savonarola under all his cares, and especially at that wonderful moment in the Piazza of Florence, before the great crowds, when, holding aloft the consecrated elements in his hands, his eyes uplifted, and quivering with excitement in his whole aspect, he said, "Lord, if I have not wrought in sincerity of soul, if my word cometh not from Thee, strike me at this moment, and let the fires of Thy wrath enclose me!" What but this led Bunyan to say to the judge, "I am at a point

with you, and if I were out of prison to-day I would, by the help of God, preach the gospel to-morrow"? At this day, when there is so much unsettlement as to the principles necessary to be held, and the doctrines essential to salvation, it is of the highest importance to foster this spirit of fealty to Christ. Almost as much grace on the part of a Christian is needful to live consistently in the midst of the present subtle temptations of a smooth prosperity, as to go to prison or to the stake. When the storm is raging, the captain's watchful eye and sailor's ready help may keep the ship from wreckage, but what can they do against the calm and heat of the tropics? When a man is likely to suffer severely for his opinions he is sure to be careful as to what principles he embraces. Still, all should be as concerned to be right and to hold the truth whether they have to suffer or not for their opinions. (*F. Hastings.*) *The names of individual souls on the breastplate of Christ:*—Never did any man receive such a testimony as this. We are surer of his salvation than of that of any other; for of him alone has Jesus Himself testified that in the latest moment of this earthly life no shadow came between him and his Lord, that he was faithful unto death. I. ANTIPAS HAD NOT, LIKE ST. PAUL, MADE CONVERTS IN A HUNDRED CITIES; he had not been in journeyings often, in perils by land and by sea, with the care of all the Churches upon him. He had lived in a heathen city, a simple believer in Christ, and, when the trial-hour came, holding fast to his principles; and his is the name which, before the judgment, the Judge has Himself pronounced blessed. We can scarcely overrate the importance of the truth here taught. How very few of us can really do much for Christ! To how very few is it given to produce any great results in the world! How few can be builders up of the faith, destroyers of heresy, converters of the heathen; ay, how exceedingly few are they who can recount that in their whole lives they have turned one sinner from the error of his ways! It may be so: but now our Lord tells us, that if only we have in our own lives and deaths witnessed for Him, if in our own souls we have held fast His Word, not allowing our faith to be shaken, doing quietly in our own sphere whatsoever our hand findeth to do, bearing what He sendeth on us—oh, we may be hidden and unknown amid the thousands of the people, and the busy world may have nothing to write on our gravestone, no triumph over sin or suffering to connect with us; but the name never heard among men shall be a familiar sound on high. II. This passage implies OUR LORD'S INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHARACTER OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL MAN. 1. He knows at this minute the trial to which we are being subjected, and our conduct under it. 2. From the beginning He knew all that we should be, all that we should go through. We know no truth at once more solemn and more encouraging than this: solemn—for what an unutterable awfulness is imparted to our daily existence by the thought that we are unfolding the roll that was written before Adam was fashioned; encouraging—for how must God watch over this life of ours, care for it, regulate it, its joys and sorrows, its cloud and sunshine, if it is no chance string of events, but a portion of His own plan from the beginning! how will He call us, each one, Antipas-like, by his name, whose every member of body and disposition of soul He foreknew when as yet there was none of them! (*Bp. Woodford.*)

Vers. 14, 15.—Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.—*The convictions of Balaam:*—The forty years' wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness was now done. The king of Moab, Balak, alarmed at the destruction which had fallen upon the powerful northern neighbours, and no doubt unaware of the command which had left him unharmed, did not venture upon open violence against the "desert-wearied" tribes. He bethought him of a more skilful mode of attack. He sent the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian, laden with presents, the reward of divination, to the "diviner," or "soothsayer"—to Balaam. Balaam, the diviner, waits upon God for direction. Balaam obeys the word of God. He refuses to go, and the messengers return. Balak, however, is importunate. Why did Balaam hesitate? Why did he bid the princes tarry yet that night? He asked in madness, and he received the permission he coveted from God in anger. It was madness in the servant of God to wish to go against God's will. The incident of the miraculous voice of the ass brought him to a sense of his sin. However, he is bidden to proceed on his mission. Thus far we read in Balaam's history the struggle between the love of the world and the overwhelming consciousness of truth in the same mind. It is an instructive lesson. How often do we feel ourselves placed, more or less, in the same position; our liking, our ambition, our heart, all set one way,—our reason, our consciousness of truth, our intellectual faith distinctly calling us the other! To

Balaam, indeed, the case was thus far different from ours, that he could not, in so broad and obvious an instance as the one of which we have been speaking, go directly against God. The voice of God in his ears compelled him; miracles dragged him; his inspiration overbore him. He was, as it were, forced into speaking the truth. To us, alas! the danger is, in such sort, greater, that our consciousness of truth, our intellectual faith, are in themselves less imperative, and are sure to sink and die away if they be smothered by want of love. Yet we also know only too well what it is to speak out faithfully, to stick to the truth in outward words, to be, it may be, its staunch defenders and admirers, while our hearts neither love it nor obey it; holding on, as it were, by our knowledge, or our logic, or our consistency, while our heart and love would fain rebel against it. A dangerous antagonism! yet one out of which there is a safe and holy escape, if those who are at all conscious of it in themselves will throw themselves, heart and soul, into confession, and win by prayer that great and precious gift, never denied to those who pray in earnest, the heart to love,—the simple, godly heart to do the thing that they know to be right, and nought beside. Let us see how it fared with Balaam. He had gone home “to his place” by the Euphrates in disgrace. The Lord had kept him back from honour. How he returned again to the court of Moab, whether summoned again by Balak or of his own irrepressible ambition, we are not told. But he came. He found the children of Israel still holding their encampment on the acacia plain of the Jordan. Wearied as they were with the desert life, surrounded by heathen rites that were full of luxury and temptation, might they not be easily led to bring upon themselves the curse, which in his unwilling lips had been turned into a blessing? Were it not a fine stroke of policy to make them curse, so to speak, themselves? No word, probably, would need to be spoken, no formal scheme proposed. A look, a gesture might suffice. Balak would be able to understand a slight hint. There were the women of Midian, they took part in the dances and plays of the sacrifices. Would it be Balaam’s fault if those hardy desert warriors, so young, so impetuous, so dangerous in their fidelity to the true God, were led by skilful and unseen management to partake in the feasts of the idol-sacrifices, and by degrees, losing their allegiance to the true Jehovah, and breaking the first of His laws, to break the seventh also, and unite themselves to the wanton women who had used every artifice to lure them to rebellion and ruin? The scheme answered only too well. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, not to be slaked till the zeal of Phineas, the son of Eleazar the high priest, after twenty-four thousand had died, stayed the plague from the children of Israel. But what of the crafty politician? Is he to triumph in secret? to compass his ends, and keep his character too? to cheat God? How his advice and double-dealing became known to the Israelites we are not told. In some way, no doubt, God, whom his cunning had outraged, revealed it to them. “Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword, among them that were slain by them.” And from that day forth, Balaam the son of Beor is known throughout the Holy Scriptures, in the writings of prophets and apostles, as the type of those who for the sake of the wages of unrighteousness, of health, reward, honour, in defiance of better knowledge, wilfully sin by casting a stumbling-block before the children of God. And what a strange course was his! strange, I mean, regarded theoretically, and without reference to the weakness and wilfulness of men. But alas for the deadly gift of cleverness! alas for the danger of that sharpness of wit which leads us to endeavour to compass our ends by indirect and circuitous means! The politician, who could not forego true words, tried his craft. He succeeded, and he failed. He succeeded against man; he failed against God. The evil that he planned, by means of other men’s sins he brought about. The personal advancement that he sought was overthrown by a miserable death, and a name blasted to all generations in the inspired oracles of God. Oh, let us turn our eyes upon ourselves! How apt we are to totter thus and stagger upon the edge of truth and duty! Not indeed visibly, intentionally, distinctly giving it up and forsaking it; but trying to hold it together with as much of worldly indulgence and prosperity as we can; trying to serve God and mammon. But if a man does thus allow himself to palter with that which ought to be the foundation and basis of all else, if he divides his aim between two objects in his life, do you suppose that that conflict will continue long? No, by no means: that which the intellect holds will yield and give way; that which the heart loves will gain strength and have victory. One way or the other, the worldly heart will have its way. It smothers the intellectual faith. It necessarily kills it. The world cannot be taken in to share the empire of the heart without becoming, ere long, the sole ruler and tyrant in it. It is, I think, not to be denied that the particular sin

of Balaam, the sin, I mean, which consists in yielding to worldly temptation in defiance of better knowledge, as it was the characteristic sin of the Church of Pergamos, so it is a very particular danger in the Church of England. There is among a very large proportion of our countrymen a general knowledge of religion, however much it may be overlaid in general and forgotten in the midst of the tumult and interests of our common life. In outer life—luxury, fashion, idleness, company, business, politics—think what multitudes of men and women, who know what truth is, and have a sort of wish to be good and true in the end, these things do keep from anything like a real conversion to God, a real yielding of themselves up, in body, soul, and conscience, to the direction of the Holy Spirit! Then blessed be sickness! blessed pain! blessed adversity! blessed sorrow! for what would become of this poor world if these things did not come upon us, now and then, to waken us up from this worldly incrustation, this growing of stone round about our hearts, and force us to lay our consciences bare and sore and naked before the merciful eye of our Heavenly Father! Oh, think of Balaam's sin! Look forth upon these young men, whose tents are pitched around you, by these "willow-shaded streams." The sacrifices to idols, the pleasant games and plays which are not of God, are soliciting them daily. The women of Midian are around them to lure them into sin. What if any of the old prophets, who know the truth, should be so fond of his ease, or so careful of his popularity, or so busy with his comfort, or his preferment, or I know not what else, as to shut his eyes, to wink at Israel's sin, and let God's children bring down upon themselves a curse, which he would not utter with his lips for all the world? What if his neglect to act upon his own convictions should give encouragement to them to forget the truth that is in them, and practically and finally to desert God? Let us obey the holy calling. Remember the exceeding danger of those who know the truth, and yet follow their own evil likings. Beware of the gradual and imperceptible on-coming of that fatal worldliness,—like the sleep of the weary traveller among the Alpine snows,—in which faith inevitably dies. Statedly, regularly, and really search your own consciences before God. (*Bp. Moberly.*)

Idolatry and sensuality in the Church.—We can gather from the context that the introduction into the Church of the world's idolatrous and sensual habits is denoted as the great evil against which the Church was listless and supine. In the apostolic day the fashion of the world had what would be to us a grosser form in its idolatry and sensuality; but in its principles and essential practice it differed in no respect then from what it is to-day. Every walk in life is full of idol fanes, before which the youth entering upon his career is tempted to worship as part of the necessary progress to preferment. In business life, in Government employ, in social circles, he is required to connive at or co-operate in falsehood and fraud, and to adopt a standard of morals such as destroyed the empire of Rome. The only alternative is a bold, heroic refusal, which thrusts him back into isolation and want. No! not isolation, not want, for no young man can take that noble position in the fear of God without being fully supplied and sustained by the Lord God of Daniel. The idolatry and sensuality of the world go together. They are parts of one whole. Men depart from the holy God and seek unto idols on purpose that they may indulge their fleshly lusts. Now when this poison enters the Church, when idols are set up in the house of God, when the rites of Molech and Ashtoreth are combined with the worship of Jehovah, a deadly disease threatens the life of the Church. The world's fashions, introduced into the Church and allowed to go unrebuked, soon captivate weak saints, suggest further compromises to stronger ones, and lower the standard of Christian life and experience for all. (*H. Crosby.*)

The doctrine of Balaam.—We are very much in the habit of supposing that when a character has been explained and denounced in Scripture, we may thenceforth regard it both as very rare and very easily detected. We are thus naturally led into a sort of security about our own resemblance to the very persons against whose sins we need to be most on our guard. 1. There is no character in Scripture concerning which it is more necessary to be careful against making these mistakes than that of Balaam, because he was not only very bad, but really very much better than many who consider themselves to be in no danger of resembling him. The fact is that Balaam had about him many good points. There was just one thing which he lacked. What that one thing was we shall see as we proceed. I should say, indeed, that Balaam, if he were among us, would be considered the pattern of a religious character; because he really proposed to himself a very high standard, and followed it rigidly, and to his own cost. How many persons are as scrupulous as Balaam was? How many persons similarly circumstanced would have hesitated about going with the messengers the first time?

He was far beyond the mere sayer of religious words. He was in a certain way—and that not very common way—conscientious: he was conscientious to his cost: and, more than this, his view of God's requirements in man was perfectly unexceptionable, and such as to show no ordinary Divine illumination. For these reasons Balaam himself might be described, up to a certain point, as "holding fast by God's name," and not denying his faith. Therefore it is not so strange that he should be the sort of character against which strictly conscientious persons should be warned, and his the "doctrine" which they might be inclined to embrace. 2. Now what is that view of religion that may be considered the "doctrine of Balaam"? As illustrated by his character, it would seem to be this, that what we have to do is to serve God without loving Him; to seek our own will and our own ends, and yet to contrive to keep out of punishment at His hands; not to desire our will to be moulded to God's will, and to be subservient to it readily and in all things; but to desire our will to be done, as far as ever it can be, within the strict letter of God's commandments. This is the main feature in the "doctrine of Balaam." Strict duty, without any love; resolute observance of a disagreeable rule, not earnest obedience to a loved parent: determination to escape punishment—no desire to please God. Now this is very much the sort of "religion" into which many honourable, upright men have a tendency to sink. To those who have no sense of religious obligation—no dread of the future—no regard for God's law—Balaam furnishes no lesson at all. They and he have no points in common. You cannot warn them against being like him, because he is so much below what he ought to be. Now, the particular act of Balaam alluded to in the text is quite in harmony with such a character as I have described. He "taught Balak," says St. John, "to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Balaam would not curse, because he was told in so many words not to curse; but he brought about a like end, by worse means—all in order that his own selfish desires might be gratified: as it would seem they were. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *Minor departure from truth*:—The carpenter's gimlet makes but a small hole, but it enables him to drive a great nail. May we not here see a representation of those minor departures from the truth which prepare the minds of men for grievous errors, and of those thoughts of sin which open a way for the worst crimes? Beware, then, of Satan's gimlet. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sin uncomely in the Church*:—As a wen looks worse on a face of beauty, and a skull on a bank of snow, so a sinner in a holy church, most uncomely and loathsome. (*T. Guthrie.*) *The Church as a whole injured by individual evil*:—The Church in Pergamos failed, not because she encouraged the sin blamed, but because she did not take more vigorous steps for its extinction. She did not sufficiently realise the fact that she was a part of the body of Christ, and that, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Believers in her community were too easily satisfied with working out their own salvation, and thought too little of presenting the whole Church "as a pure virgin to Christ." Therefore it was that, even amidst much faithfulness, they need to repent to feel more deeply than they did that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and that in the Church of the Lord Jesus we are to a large extent responsible not only for our own but for our neighbours' sins. By keeping up the Christian tone of the whole Church the tone of each member of the Church is heightened. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly.—*The necessity of immediate repentance*:—I. WHAT THAT REPENTANCE IS THAT IS HERE ENJOINED. Repentance in Scripture has a threefold acceptance. 1. It is taken for the first act by which the soul turns from sin to God; the first dividing stroke that separates between sin and the heart; the first step and advance that a sinner makes to holiness; the first endeavours and throes of a new birth. 2. It is taken for the whole course of a pious life, comprising the whole actions a man performs from first to last inclusively; from his first turning from a wicked life to the last period of a godly. 3. Repentance is taken for a man's turning to God after the guilt of some particular sin. It differs from the former thus: that the former is from a state of sin: this latter only from a sinful act. No repentance precedes the former, but this supposes a true repentance to have gone before. This repentance, therefore, builds upon the former; and it is that which is here intended. II. ARGUMENTS TO ENGAGE US IN THE SPEEDY AND IMMEDIATE EXERCISE OF THIS DUTY. 1. No man can be secure of the future. Neither, indeed, will men act as if they were in things that concern this life, for no man willingly defers his pleasures. And did

men here well compute the many frailties of nature, and further add the contingencies of chance, how quickly a disease from within, or a blow from without, may tear down the strongest constitution, certainly they would ensure eternity upon something else than a life as uncertain as the air that feeds it. 2. Supposing the allowance of time, yet we cannot be sure of power to repent. It is very possible, that by the insensible encroachments of sin a man's heart may be so hardened as to have neither power nor will to repent, though he has time and opportunity. The longer the heart and sin converse together, the more familiar they will grow; and then, the stronger the familiarity, the harder the separation. A man at first is strong and his sin is weak, and he may easily break the neck of it by a mature repentance; but his own deluding heart tells him that he had better repent hereafter; that is, when, on the contrary, he himself is deplorably weak and his sin invincibly strong. 3. Admitting a man has both time and grace to repent, yet by such delay the work will be incredibly more difficult. The longer a debt lies unpaid, the greater it grows; and not discharged, is quickly multiplied. The sin to be repented of will be the greater, and power and strength to repent by will be less. And though a man escapes death, the utmost effect of his distemper, yet certainly he will find it something to be cut and scarified and lanced and to endure all the tortures of a deferred cure. We find not such fierce expressions of vengeance against any sinner, as the Spirit of God, in Deut. *xxix.* 20, 21, discharges against him that obstinately delayed his repentance. (1) Because it is the abuse of a remedy. Certainly it cannot but be the highest provocation to see guilt kick at mercy, and presumption take advantage merely from a redundancy of compassion. He that will fight it out, and not surrender, only because he has articles of peace offered to him, deserves to feel the sword of an unmerciful enemy. (2) The reason why God is exasperated by our delaying this duty is, because it clearly shows that a man does not love it, as a duty, but only intends to use it for an expedient of escape. It is not because it is pleasing to God, grateful to an offended majesty, or because he apprehends a worth and excellency in the thing itself; for then he would set about it immediately: for love is quick and active, and desire hates all delay. (3) A third reason that God's displeasure so implacably burns against this sin is, because it is evidently a counterplotting of God, and being wise above the prescribed methods of salvation, to which God makes the immediate dereliction of sin necessary. But he that defers his repentance makes this his principle, to live a sinner and die a penitent. (*R. South, D.D.*) To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.—*Christian victory*:—The Christian life is often compared in Scripture to "a warfare." It is not enough to put on the armour and to commence the battle. He that overcometh, and he alone, will receive the salutation, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But we are not left to fight without encouragement. As generals before a battle go in front of their troops to stimulate them to valour, so Christ, the Captain of our salvation, leads on the consecrated hosts of His elect. I. THE PROMISE. 1. The promise of the hidden manna. God fed the Israelites in the wilderness with manna. A portion of this was laid by in the ark, and thus was hidden from public view. Christ, speaking of the manna as a type of Himself, said, "I am the Bread which came down from heaven." Jesus is the food of our faith, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He is the food of our love, "We love Him because He first loved us." He is the food of our obedience, "The love of Christ constraineth us." He is the food of our peace, for when "justified by faith, we have peace with God." He is the food of our joy, for if "we joy in God" it is "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is the food of our hope, "that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The manna which sustained the Israelites was evidently the gift of God. And so this "hidden manna" is from heaven. It is no contrivance of man, no philosophy of human invention. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." It is spoken of as the "hidden manna." Such is the Christian's life. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." The outward effects of it may be seen, but the inner life is invisible. So is the nourishing of the life. You may see the Christian on his knees, you may hear the words which he utters, but you cannot see the streams of Divine influence which are poured into his spirit; nor hear the sweet whispers of Divine love which fill him with joy; nor comprehend the peace passing all understanding which he is permitted to experience. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Were this promise merely the reward of final victory, that victory itself would never be gained. We need to eat this manna during our

pilgrimage. We cannot live without it. Every act of overcoming will be followed by a verification of the promise, "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna." Yet we must look beyond the present life for its full accomplishment. As the manna was hidden in the ark, and that ark was hidden behind the curtain of the holy of holies, so the Christian's hope "as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, enters into that which is within the veil." Those joys we cannot yet conjecture; their splendour is too intense. 2. The promise of the white stone. At a time when houses of public entertainment were less common, private hospitality was the more necessary. When one person was received kindly by another, or a contract of friendship was entered into, the *tessera* was given. It was so named from its shape, being four-sided; it was sometimes of wood, sometimes of stone; it was divided into two by the contracting parties; each wrote his own name on half of the *tessera*; then they exchanged pieces, and therefore the name or device on the piece of the *tessera* which each received was the name the other person had written upon it, and which no one else knew but him who received it. It was carefully prized, and entitled the bearer to protection and hospitality. Plautus, in one of his plays, refers to this custom. Hanno inquires of a stranger where he may find Agorastocles, and discovers to his surprise that he is addressing the object of his search. "If so," he says, "compare, if you please, this hospitable *tessera*; here it is; I have it with me." Agorastocles replies, "It is the exact counterpart; I have the other part at home." Hanno responds, "O my friend, I rejoice to meet thee; thy father was my friend, my guest; I divided with him this hospitable *tessera*." "Therefore," said Agorastocles, "thou shalt have a home with me, for I reverence hospitality." Beautiful illustration of gospel truth! The Saviour visits the sinner's heart, and being received as a guest, bestows the white stone, the token of His unchanging love. He who chooses the sinner's heart as His banqueting chamber, spreads there His choicest gifts—His exceeding great and precious promises, His finished sacrifice, His human sympathy, His perfect example, His pure precepts, His all-prevailing intercession, the various developments of His infinite love. He enrolls our name among His friends. "He makes an everlasting covenant with us, ordered in all things and sure." He promises never to leave nor forsake us. He tells us we "shall never perish." He gives us the *tessera*, the white stone! Is not this "the witness of the Spirit," the "earnest of the promised possession"? Does not His voice in our heart echo to His voice in the written Word? On this white stone is inscribed a "new name." The part of the *tessera* which each of the contracting parties received contained the name of the other. And therefore the "new name" on the "white stone" which he that overcometh receives is that of Him who gives it. By the unbeliever God is known as Power, as Majesty, as Justice. The Christian alone knows Him as "Love." He was once Ruler—now He is Friend; He was once Judge—now He is Father. Do you know God by His "new name"? Do you so know Him as to wish no longer to hide from Him, but to hide in Him, as the only home in which you can be safe and happy? Then, everywhere, in every city and every village, on the desert and on the ocean, in the solitude of secrecy and in the solitude of a crowd, in the bustle of business and in the sick chamber, a Friend is at hand who will always recognise the white stone He gave us as a token of His love. We have only to present it to claim the fulfilment of His promise. What Divine entertainment we shall receive! What safety from peril! What succour in difficulty! What comfort in trouble! What white raiment! What heavenly food! What exalted fellowship! What secure repose! A day is coming when we must leave the homes of earth, however endeared, and embrace for the last time the friends united to us as our own souls. What kind roof will receive us? What loving friend will welcome us? We shall not have left our best treasure behind! No! we shall carry the white stone with us; and looking for no inferior abode, shall advance at once right up to the palace of the Great King. We present the *tessera*; the "new name" is legible upon it; the angelic guards recognise the symbol; the everlasting gates lift up their heads; and the voice of Jesus Himself invites us to enter! II. THE CONDITION ANNEXED. A great war is being waged. It is not merely between the Church as a whole and the powers of darkness as a whole; it is not merely an affair of strategy between two vast armies, wherein skilful manœuvres determine the issue, many on either side never coming into actual combat; but it is also a duel, for every Christian has to fight hand to hand with the enemy. God, as our Creator and Redeemer, justly demands our obedience and love. Whatever interferes with these claims is a enemy summoning us to battle.

The world, the flesh, and the devil, draw up their battalions in imposing array. If we would possess the promise, we must "overcome" them. A mere profession of religion is of no avail. We must devote ourselves entirely and unreservedly to this great daily battle of life. It is a warfare until death. While we are in the body it will be always true, "We wrestle." The oldest Christian cannot lay aside his weapons. The whole of the way, up to the very gate of heaven, is beset with foes, and we must fight to the last if we would overcome and enter in. Ah, it is no soft flowery meadow along which we may languidly stroll, but a rough, craggy cliff that we must climb. "To him that overcometh!" It is no smooth, placid stream along which we may dreamily float, but a tempestuous ocean we must stem. "To him that overcometh!" It is no lazy lolling in a cushioned chariot that bears us on without fatigue and peril, but plodding painfully in heavy marching order up the long and weary and beleagured road of self-sacrifice. "To him that overcometh!" It is not a time of listless repose, of careless mirth, as if no danger threatened, no foe were near. We fight in good company. The truly wise of all ages are on our side. We have the assured hope of victory. (*Newman Hall, LL.D.*)

The manna and the stone.—In Pergamos there were two houses, which represented the two forces that made life a battle to the Christian. One was the Church of Christ and the other was the temple of idolatry. When a man left that gorgeous temple in the great square he left everything that appealed to ease and pride and ambition. When he entered the poor little church in the back lane, he entered into conflict with his heart and with the world. That single renunciation of the sweets and successes of life was but the beginning of the strife. In the Church itself were some who taught that the Christian need not break with his former life in choosing Christ. The promise in the text corresponds to that temptation. Let these worshippers of the Christ keep from the meats of the idol shrine, and they shall feast on the best in the house of God. Let them refuse to be votaries of the foul altar, and they shall be very priests of the holy of holies. Let them forego the society of the heathen, and they shall be the close and particular friends of Him who is the visible Divinity of the heavenly sanctuary. **I. A PROVISION PECULIAR TO THE SANCTUARY IS PROMISED TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH.** Let us be loyal to Jesus now, as we see Him not, and at the end of the brief trial we shall come face to face with Him. He shall look on us with joy. He shall lead us forward, and name us to all heaven. He of whom we have had so many thoughts, and to whom we have winged so many words, shall be a real and close presence. And that hidden manna, laid bare thus to our adoring gaze, is no mere feast for our eyes, but true food for our soul. That near and constant companionship with Jesus shall cheer and strengthen and exalt our life. In new knowledge of Him, in new love, in new likeness, we shall receive Him ever anew and ever more fully. How poor, then, how altogether past and perished, are the joys for which we almost bartered the rich provision of the eternal sanctuary! Our gracious Lord does not, after all, make us wait for the prize until the fight is won. He brings to us, even in the stress of the struggle, a foretaste of the feast. He makes our poor, fainting heart a sanctuary, and turns our faith into a sacred ark for the manna. We have Him in us, and heaven with Him. So we have food of which the world knows nothing.

II. A DIGNITY PECULIAR TO THE SANCTUARY IS PROMISED TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH. To have a right to enter the holiest, and to look on its secrets, meant, indeed, no less than to be High Priest. No other had the privilege of lifting the veil. This was an honour so great that it was solitary. He who was called of God to this dignity wore on his heart a symbol of it. This was the mystic Urim and Thummim—the light and the perfection. Like the glory over the ark, it was the symbol of Jehovah Himself—the Infinite in purity and in loveliness. This diamond was likely the one stone of its kind known to Israel, for the gem so named as on the breastplate was assuredly a commoner jewel. This unique stone was white with the very splendour of its shining, and it was given to Aaron as the badge of his dignity. With that upon his heart he had assurance of access to the very glory of God. Such was the dignity promised to those who kept their feet from the threshold of the heathen temple. Let them care nothing for the social standing which would be theirs as worshippers of the idol, and instead they shall have the loftiest rank in the home of God. Theirs to go to the inmost, holiest spot, and to have the foremost favour, and do the foremost service. And to us, tried by the like seductions, is the same cheer sent. If we, after all, do cling to the Lover of our soul, He shall at once put into our hand the mystic stone which means so much. Now, even as we war, is the priest's badge hung on the soldier's breastplate. The

Urim of old was but a dead stone, and it lay but on the breast. It was but an outward symbol of God. This white stone is lustrous with the very Light, which is God, and it is hidden within the breast itself. The upshining of faith, the far-darting beams of hope, and the outspreading glow of love are glories born of God's own glory. A Divine nature begins at the centre of the human nature, and as the Christian obeys it, it grows. III. A COMMUNION PECULIAR TO THE SANCTUARY IS PROMISED TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH. The Urim of the High Priest was sacred because of the sacred purpose to which it was put as a symbol of God. But it was made yet holier by a more personal connection with Him. It is supposed, at least, that graven on the flashing stone were the four sacred letters which express the thrice holy name of Jehovah. So intimately did the Jews associate the word with the person that they forbore to utter it. It stood for all of God which He had made known to men. To see it was to see, through it, the Invisible One. When the priest, therefore, found the name written on the stone, he understood that God was to be his, and to be with him. As if from the midst of very glory the Glorious One was to draw near to him. Whenever in secret he laid bare the hidden name his spirit was hushed by the Holy Presence. He heard a gentle yet majestic voice whose words he felt as very love and very truth. He let his own heart answer, and knew that his thoughts were pulsing in an ear close and quick. Such a solemn and yet blessed fellowship was the peculiar privilege of the priest. It is promised also to those who shall let the friendships of earth go rather than belie their friendship with Jesus. To them, indeed, an intimacy even nearer and dearer still is here prefigured. In the white stone which they wear is set a new word for God. He is to let them know what none else has learned as to what He is. By the lips of Jesus He is to unveil His heart in a special way to them. This third hidden thing, like the other two, is a boon of which we may have the first-fruits now. Like those Christians of Pergamos we take on us the name of Christ. Let us but hold it fast, as they did, in spite of every temptation to deny our faith, and we shall in that very loyalty attain a special communion with our Lord, and receive a special name for God. Heaven will but make this name the dearer and the deeper a secret between the soul and its God. (D. Burns.) *The spiritual warfare, and the Divine promise*:—I. THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE. 1. We must overcome the evil that is within ourselves. The best of men have spoken with sorrow of the state of their own hearts. "In many things we all offend." "If we say we have no sin," &c. "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" &c. The Christian Church has always recognised the same mournful truth. The *Te Deum Laudamus* is the greatest Christian hymn. It is a lofty song of faith, hope, and triumph; but a trembling undertone of sadness runs through its joyous praise. "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us." The reason why good men see and feel the evil within them is that they are good men. The Spirit of God dwells in them and His light reveals the soul to itself. The holier we are, the more shall we feel our own imperfections. But it is not enough to feel and bewail the evil; we should also overcome it. The human heart resembles a garden. If rightly cared for, it will grow flowers of greatest beauty and trees abundant in fruit; but if neglected, it will put forth noxious weeds and worthless thorns and briars. 2. We must overcome the opposition of the world. The Christians at Ephesus fought against error, and overcame it, and hence the praise given to them. There are two ways in which you may attempt to overcome error. First, you may make direct war against it; you may use arguments, and show that it is error and not truth, a phantom and not any real thing whatsoever. Your mind is the bow, your arguments are the arrows; the bow may be strong, and the arrows sharp and well aimed; but what matters it? They can do but little harm to the phantom. The second method of opposing error is the establishment of positive truth. When the fire of the glowworm begins to pale and the birds stir among the branches and the dawn opens in the east, the ghost in a great play is made to vanish from the sight. The spirit of the world is also to be overcome. There is nothing more difficult to overcome than this. A man may reason against false doctrines and confute their teachers; and he may have courage, and defy persecution in all its forms. But this spirit is subtle, silent, and penetrating. Living within the circle of its influence, we can hardly escape its effects. It is like an impure atmosphere; if you breathe it at all, you must inhale the poison. 3. We have to overcome the influence of the Wicked One. Deceit, fraud, guile, malice, and all the serpent qualities are ascribed to him; and of him it may be said, "Dust shall be the serpent's meat."

This evil spirit is called "the Tempter." He showed our Saviour all the kingdoms of the world, and said, "Worship me, and this power and glory shall be Thine." He is ever revealing such things to men. True, they are only phantom kingdoms which he paints before the imagination; but then they appear most real at the time. The question we have to decide is, Shall we fall down before the Tempter like the first Adam, or overcome with "the Second Man, the Lord from heaven"?

II. THE DIVINE PROMISE. 1. Christ strengthens and supports the soul in its conflict with evil. Let the experience of the apostles illustrate this. In their outward circumstances they had all the elements of unhappiness and misery. But a greater Power was for them than that by which they were opposed. The promised and mysterious Presence followed them through all the trials, temptations, and sorrows of life. They fought, overcame, and received the crown of victory. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." We should mark their experience at the time of their great conflict. The world frowned, but heaven smiled upon their spirit. They were not only able to withstand the enemy, but they had peace, joy, and consolation in the midst of the strife. "The peace of God"—a plentiful stream from the fountain of all blessedness—flowed into their hearts. 2. The strength which Christ gives is known only to the soul who receives it. It is "hidden manna." Nature has her "open secrets." They are exposed to the gaze of all, but all have not the power to behold them—open and yet secret. This applies to the spiritual life. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The Divine energy that braces the mind and heart for noble deeds; the peace which results from perfect reconciliation to God; the consolation imparted to the soul by His Spirit—these are the open secrets of religion. They are open and clear as daylight. But from the unbelieving, from the proud, from the worldly, and from the disobedient they are concealed. Being unfelt they must be unknown, for they are revealed to the heart rather than to the intellect.

(T. Jones.) *The laurels of a victorious life*:—I. DIVINE SUSTENTATION. 1. His doctrines are bread to the intellect. 2. His fellowship is bread to the heart. 3. His Spirit is bread to the whole life. II. DIVINE DISTINCTION. 1. "The sign of distinction." "A white stone." He will have full admission into all the honours of eternity. 2. The character of the distinction. (Homilist.) *Moral conquest and its destiny*:—I. THE VICTORY. The life of the good is a stern moral conflict, pervading every sphere of life—the home, the mart, the shop, &c. It is impossible to go where the strife is not. In this way character is tested and developed, and our attachment to Christ revealed. 1. Moral conquest is required, not an indolent evasion of the strife. 2. Moral conquest is required, not a cowardly retreat in the conflict of life. 3. Moral conquest is required, not an easy method of attaining the dignity of the future life. II. THE REPAST. 1. This repast is in sublime contrast to any other that can be provided. 2. It is concealed from the unsanctified gaze of men. 3. It will give eternal satisfaction to all who shall partake of it. III. THE REVELATION. 1. The Christian victor will enter upon the highest method of moral life. 2. The Christian victor will enjoy the most complete revelation of God. Lessons: 1. Learn to fight the good fight of faith. 2. Persevere unto victory. 3. Take courage from this glimpse of your reward. (J. S. Exell, M.A.)

The rewards of the conquering Christian:—I. THE TEXT IS ADDRESSED TO "HIM THAT OVERCOMETH." 1. The man to whom this description can be applied must certainly be one who knows that he has spiritual enemies assailing him. He must have discovered that he has interests at stake, which the world, the flesh, and the devil unite in opposing. The idea of a victory necessarily presupposes a contest. 2. The language before us must imply, therefore, that the man to whom these blessings are promised is contending with the enemies by whom he finds himself surrounded. It describes the Christian, not as the friend of the world, but the determined opposer of its corrupt maxims and customs; not as the obedient slave of the prince of darkness, but his decided foe. It is this habitual conflict with evil which constitutes the great difference between the servant of God and the man of the world. It is this which testifies that our understandings are enlightened, that our conscience is on the side of God, that our affections have been touched by His grace, and a principle of a new and spiritual life communicated to our souls. But we must not stop here. 3. The texts leads us to infer that the Christian is actually overcoming his enemies. The world is gradually losing its power over him; Satan is bruised underneath his feet; and as for his lusts, they are one by one weakened and subdued. Oh what a blessed victory is this! Who does not long to share in its honours and inherit its rewards? But these rewards are not easily attained, neither

is this victory easily won. No mortal power can achieve it. The victory must be ascribed to God. It is He who gives us at first a disposition to struggle with our adversaries; it is He who crowns that struggle with success. II. But though the victory is the Lord's, He often condescends to speak of it as attained by the Christian himself; and He promises him in the text A GRACIOUS AND RICH REWARD. 1. One of the blessings comprehended in this promise is pardon. But a mere acquittal, precious as it is to us, is too poor a gift for the Captain of our salvation to bestow. 2. He adds to it the blessing of adoption. God Himself "is not ashamed to be called his God," and prepares for His long lost but now recovered son a never ending feast of joy. 3. Hence spiritual provision is another blessing included in this promise. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The hidden manna* :—I. THERE IS A VICTORY TO BE GAINED.

1. We must overcome Satan. He was not afraid to assail our blessed Lord. We have times of special darkness and assault. 2. There is a victory over ourselves; over the evil of our own hearts; over the corruption of our own natures. 3. You must overcome false doctrines. You must resist all unscriptural opinions. 4. If there is any easily-besetting sin, any marked peculiarity of your condition which has a tendency to evil, it must be overcome. Is there constitutional temperament which is unfavourable to virtue? Bring your body into subjection. 5. Lastly, there is victory over the world; and in two forms of it—first, as intimidating, and second, as persecuting. Men and women are victors on earth as they adhere to the truth, as they practise virtue, and do the will of God, and are conformed to the image and example of the Lord Jesus. II. THE PRIVILEGES THAT ACCOMPANY THE CONQUEST THAT IS GAINED. 1. Here is the hidden manna; that is the first thing. It is the secret hidden knowledge and experience of the efficacy, power, and satisfaction of the truth and doctrine of the Lord Jesus. Let the believer eat and be satisfied; satisfied in the love of God, in the grace of Christ, and in the communion of the Holy Spirit. 2. And I will give him a white stone. This indicates absolution from all sin and the forgiveness of all iniquity. There is forgiveness in the court of heaven, and in the court of our own consciences. 3. Lastly, it is said that in the stone there shall be a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. We may take a person to be a hypocrite and a castaway, when God sees him to be His child. No one knows but God and ourselves. Judge not others; judge yourself. (*Jas. Stratten.*)

A white stone.—A white stone :—I. VICTORY. There is before my mind's eye a vision of the ancient Olympic games. Vast amphitheatre, with seats rising tier on tier, crowded with eager and excited spectators. Sweet perfume drops through the canopy which shelters from the burning sun, and clouds of dust rise from the chariot-wheels, from the glowing hoofs of the horses, and from the swift feet of those who run. By and by I hear a mighty shout that almost rends the welkin, as the plaudits of the thousands echo round the scene; and presently a man steps forward who has won the race, or slain the lion, or killed the gladiator, to receive from the emperor's own hand a crown of laurel leaves which fades by the very heat of the head that wears it. I notice also that the emperor gives him a pure white stone, with his name written on it. He is now entitled, on presentation of that white stone ticket, to be fed at the country's expense, and to be fêted and honoured well-nigh wheresoever he goes. Now, the Christian life is a race; the Christian experience is a conflict. Rise to the battle now. Go on to victory, and to thy reward. II. PURITY. I see now an ancient tribunal where the judges sit. There are lictors bearing the *fascæ*—a bundle of sticks with an axe-head bound up amongst them, the symbol of justice and of punishment. I see the jurors in their places; I listen to the progress of the trial; and when all the witnesses have been heard, and the prisoner has made his own defence, I notice that into the ballot-box are cast some little stones. Some are white, others black; but, thank God, the white stones predominate, and the foreman of the jury having counted them, declares that the prisoner is not guilty and should be dismissed. So in this place of sin, with all the enticements of evil, there were some who retained their purity and spotlessness—some who, like Joseph, fled at the tempter's voice; some who, like Daniel, could not forget the Lord their God; some who, like the holy children, would rather blaze in the furnace than bow before the image. To such the token of innocence was given. How is it with thee? III. NOVELTY. I remember to have seen one of Doré's celebrated pictures—"The entry of Christ into Jerusalem"—shortly after it was painted, when the colours were all bright and beautiful; and though I much admired the drawing, I was particularly struck with the colouring. Everything seemed so fresh and new; of course it was in a new frame, and the very faces of the people seemed lighted up with a new joy as they beheld their King. It is possible that the

colours have faded before this, but this I know—that Christ's triumphal entry into the sinner's heart brings glorious sunshine, new joys, new hopes, new songs, new desires, new everything. 1. The new name is the name of adoption. 2. Then there is the new name of espousal, for we are married unto Him, and He to us. 3. There is the new name, too, of promotion for those who overcome. It were a grand thing to be a private in Christ's army, to belong to the rank and file of the Lord's elect; but when He says, "Come up higher, and I will exalt thee, for thou hast exalted Me," it is better still; and this He does so often as we fight His battles well, and every victory leads to some fresh reward. 4. The new name that we shall get at last is the name of glorification. Worms now, we shall be angels then; sinful creatures at present, sons of the living God and brighter than the seraphs shall we then appear.

IV. **SECRECY.** The name He gives is unknown, except to those who receive it. The world cannot understand us, or our joys, or our sorrows. These are spiritual things, and must be spiritually discerned. V. **CHARITY.** Everything that we have is God's good gift. If we eat of hidden manna, it is because He gives us to eat thereof, and if we have the earnest of the Spirit it is because He gives us the pure white stone. Some think there is a reference here to a stone called the *tessera hospitalis*. My heart is open to Christ; heaven is open to me.

I am His property and He my possession; He holds me in His mighty hand, and I retain my hold on Him with such faith as He gives me. (*J. A. Spurgeon.*)

The white stone:—With this white stone may the saints comfort themselves against all the black coals wherewith the world seeks to besmear them. (*J. Trapp.*)

A new name written.—*The new name:*—I. THE LARGE HOPES WHICH GATHER ROUND THIS PROMISE OF A "NEW NAME." Abraham and Jacob, in the Old Testament, received new names from God; Peter and the sons of Zebedee, in the New Testament, received new names from Christ. In the sad latter days of the Jewish monarchy its kings, being deposed by barbarian and pagan conquerors, were reinstated, with new names imposed upon them by the victors. In all these cases the imposition of the new name implies authority and ownership on the part of the giver; and generally a relationship to the giver, with new offices, functions, and powers on the part of the receiver. And so when Christ from the heavens declares that He will rename the conqueror, He asserts on the one hand His own absolute authority over him, and on the other hand His own perfect knowledge of the nature and inmost being of the creature He names. And, still further, He gives a promise of a nature renewed, of new functions committed to the conqueror, of new spheres, new closeness of approach to Himself, new capacities, and new powers. Can we go any further? Let me just remind you that there are two things that shine out plain and clear in the midst of the darkness and vagueness that surround the future glories of the redeemed. The one is their closer relationship to Jesus Christ; the other is their possession, in the ultimate and perfect state, of a body of which the predicates are incorruption, glory, power, and which is a fit organ for the spirit, even as the present corporeal house in which we dwell is an adequate organ for the animal life, and for that alone.

II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHRIST'S "NEW NAME" AND OURS. What is this "new name" of Christ's? Obviously the new name of Jesus is a revelation of His character, nature, and heart; a new manifestation of Himself to the glad eyes of those that loved Him, when they saw Him amidst the darkness and the mists of earth, and so have been honoured to see Him more clearly amidst the radiances of the glories of heaven. Only remember that when we speak of a "new name" of Christ's as being part of the blessedness of the future state to which we may humbly look forward, it is no antiquating of the old name. Nothing will ever make the Cross of Jesus Christ less the centre of the revelation of God than it is to-day. But the new name is the new name of the old Christ. Then what is the inscription of that name upon the conqueror? It is not merely the manifestation of the revealed character of Jesus in new beauty, but it is the manifestation of His ownership of His servants by their transformation into His likeness, which transformation is the consequence of their new vision of Him. III. THE BLESSED SECRET OF THE NEW NAME. "No man knoweth it save he that receiveth it."

Of course not. There is only one way to know the highest things in human experience, and that is by possessing them. Nobody can describe love, sorrow, gladness, so as to awaken a clear conception of them in hearts that have never experienced them. That is eminently true about religion, and it is most of all true about that perfect future state. A chrysalis, lying under ground, would know about as much of what it would be like when it had got its wings and lived upon sweetness and blazed in the sunshine, as a man when he lets his imagination attempt to construct

a picture of another life. Death keeps his secret well, and we have to pass his threshold before we know what lies beyond. But more than that. That same blessed mystery lies round about the name of each individual possessor, to all but himself. Just as we shall know Christ perfectly, and bear His new name inscribed upon our foreheads, and yet He has "a name which no man knoweth but He Himself," so the mystery of each redeemed soul will still remain impenetrable to others. But it will be a mystery of no painful darkness, nor making any barrier between ourselves and the saints whom we love. Rather it is the guarantee of an infinite variety in the manner of possessing the one name. All the surrounding diamonds that are set about the central blaze shall catch the light on their faces, and from one it will come golden, and from another violet, and another red, and another flashing and pure white. Each glorified spirit shall reveal Christ, and yet the one Christ shall be manifested in infinite variety of forms, and the total summing up of the many reflections will be the image of the whole Lord. IV. THE GIVING OF THE NEW NAME TO THE VICTORS. The language of my text involves two things, "To him that overcometh" lays down the conditions; "Will I give" lays down the cause of the possession of the "new name"—that is to say, this renovation of the being, and efflorescence into new knowledges, activities, perfections, and joys is only possible on condition of the earthly life of obedience and service and conquest. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The secret of the new name*:—The book which is the grand interpreter of man's inward nature and relations makes repeated references to the sacred power of names. In the biblical view, to give anything a name is to perform an act of religion. What is it? It is to apply to some individual object, having God for its maker, that sign by which it shall be known, separated from other things, and called: and surely that ought to be done reverently, as in the presence of Him from whom all things came, and to whom all things are known. When we rise to the plane of human life, this same sanctity of names becomes more evident yet. Because then they come to stand not only for individual existences, but for conscious beings. They mark off soul from soul, among the infinite ranks and gradations of the immortal family, on earth and in heaven, that no man can number. If we ascend still higher, from the human to the Divine, the power of names is more signally manifested yet. Him whom no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hand touched, we yet know by His wonderful and Almighty name—our God. It is striking that the Scriptures everywhere speak of the "name" of the Lord as of the Lord Himself. His name is His glory, His presence, His power, His wisdom, His person—and it is the only outward sign, or bond, of personal communication between Him and us who are allowed to make no image of Him. How impressive, too, that when His great manifestation is to be made in humanity, it is declared that the eternal Word is made flesh. That is the uttered Divinity—the God pronounced, communicated to man, through the Incarnation. After the Redeemer appeared, the universal command to Christendom was that its prayers should be lifted to the Father "in the name" of Christ. So we arrive at the point of the text: "To him that overcometh," saith that Faithful and True Witness, the First and the Last, "will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The spiritual truth which the veil of figure covers can hardly be mistaken. He that overcometh—every victorious soul prevailing by faith and by righteousness in the long and patient battle of life—shall have secret satisfactions springing up in his heart, known only between himself and his Lord. They will not consist in outward applauses, in visible successes, in any worldly compensations whatever. The chief of them all will be the silent assurances of His personal affection, who is the purest, highest, holiest. The token of His favour will be the inestimable good. So much light does advancing excellence always cast on old forms of truth, a deeper life ever illuminating even familiar oracles, that the very name of the Christ shall have a new meaning. It shall be a new name. It shall have a personal charm and preciousness to each several believer. None shall know it as he knoweth it that receiveth it. I. THE STRICT AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALITY OF ALL REAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. Sooner or later some monitory Providence comes and searches us, and shows that the path to God's right hand is in great part a lonely one. II. A second characteristic of that true inward life which the text implies is that ITS REWARDS ARE NOT SUCH AS CAN BE DESCRIBED BEFOREHAND. No man knoweth them saving he that receiveth them. They remain to come out and be felt unexpectedly in their place. The very result the religion of Christ undertakes to achieve in men's hearts is disinterested devotion. Virtue under pay is no longer

virtue. Faith is not hired. Why, even in all the loftier and purer human relationships, affection scorns the calculations of self-interest. There is not a tie of holy friendship on earth but feels itself insulted by the suggestion of a price.

III. CHRISTIAN PIETY IS TO BE PRIZED FOR ITS SECRET INTRINSIC QUALITY, RATHER THAN FOR ITS QUOTABLE RESULTS. No man knoweth it like him that hath it. Its hidden testimonies are worth more than its public demonstrations. Being religious for effect spoils the effect—like being honest for effect, or humble for effect, or affectionate or chaste for effect. It runs straight to a base hypocrisy, and not only abolishes its own influence, but begets a general scepticism of sincerity which blights every high interest, and unsettles virtue itself. Faith must dwell in her own sanctuary, see by her own light, feed on her own secret and immortal manna, be content with her own joy, cling to the white stone with the ineffable name, and wait for her spiritual justification and victory. To selfish, earth-bound hearts no secrets are revealed. No tokens of personal remembrance, no signs of secret favour come from the Master.

IV. It has been applied all along as a chief doctrine lying at the very heart of this passage, as it lies at the heart of the gospel itself, that THE SPECIAL CHARACTER AND PRIVILEGE OF THE CHRISTIAN REST IN A PERSONAL AND CONSCIOUS UNION BETWEEN HIM AND HIS LIVING REDEEMER. (*Bp. F. D. Huntington.*)

The new name :—The “white stone” has been spoken of as being the symbol of acquittal, of election and choice, of admission to the heavenly banquet; all which may be true. But there is one objection to any such interpretations, namely, that they all are gathered from the circle of heathen associations, whereas the whole Apocalypse moves within the circle of Jewish symbols. So, then, if we doubt as to the force of these and other similar interpretations, have we anything in the Jewish history, especially somewhere about the same period as the manna, which may help us? I think that an explanation which has been sometimes given seems to be commended by very many considerations. There was a precious stone, lustrous and resplendent—for that is the force of the word “white” here, not a dead white but a brilliant coruscating white—on which there was something written, which no eye but one ever saw, that mysterious seat of revelation and direction known in the Old Testament by the name of Urim and Thummim (that is, lights and perfectnesses), enclosed within the folds of the High Priest’s breast-plate, which none but the High Priest ever beheld. We may, perhaps, bring that ancient fact into connection with the promise in my text, and then it opens out into a whole world of suggestions with regard to the priestly dignity of the victors, with regard to the gift that is bestowed upon them, a hidden gift worn upon their breasts and containing within it and inscribed upon it the Divine name, unseen by any eye but that of him that bears it.

I. THAT NEW NAME IS CHRIST’S AND OURS. It is His first, it becomes ours by communication from Him. 1. “I will give him a new name”—a deeper, a more inward, a fresh knowledge and revelation of My own character—as eternal love, eternal wisdom, all-sufficient, absolute power, the home and treasure, the joy and righteousness of the whole heart and spirit. The Cross remains for ever the revelation of the love of God, but in heaven we shall learn what we know not here—the full wealth which shall succeed the earnest of the inheritance, and possessing the lustrous glories we shall understand something more of the infinite mercy that has bought them for us. The sun remains the same, but as different as its sphere looks, seen from the comet at its aphelion, away out far beyond the orbits of the planets in the dim regions of that infinite abyss, and seen from the same orb at its perihelion when it circles round close by the burning brightness, so different does that mighty Sun of righteousness look to us now in His eternal self-revelation, by sacrifice and death, from what He will seem in that same self-revelation when we shall stand by His side!

2. On this new revelation of the name of Christ there follows as a consequence assimilation to the name which we possess, transformation into the likeness of Him whom we behold. We cannot know His name without sharing it. If we behold His glory we shall possess it, as the light must enter the eye for vision. The light and the soul which receives will, as it were, act and react. The light beheld transforms. The soul transformed is capable of more light. That again flows in and purifies and beautifies. Thus, in continuous reciprocal energy, the endless process of learning to know an infinite Saviour, and becoming like a perfect Lord goes on with constant approximation, and yet with somewhat ever undisclosed. The gift is not once for all, but is continuous through eternity.

3. Then there is a third idea implied in this promise, if the new name be Christ’s, and that is possession or consecration. His name is given, that is, His character is revealed. His character is imparted, and further, by the gift He takes

as well as gives, He takes us for His even in giving Himself to be ours. The High Priest's mitre bore on its front "Holiness to the Lord," and one of the last and highest promises of Scripture is cast in the form supplied by the symbol of Aaron's office and honour, "His servants shall serve Him"—in priestly service that is—"and they shall see His face." Action and contemplation, so hard to harmonise here, shall blend at last. "And His name shall be in their foreheads," the token of His possession, manifest for all eyes to behold. And thus when we behold Him we become like Him, and in the measure which we become like Him we belong to Him, not one step further. II. THIS NEW NAME IS UNKNOWN EXCEPT BY ITS POSSESSOR. That, of course, is true in all regions of human experience. Did ever anybody describe a taste so that a man that had not tasted the thing could tell what it was like? Did ever anybody describe an odour so as to do more than awaken the memory of some one who had once had the scent lingering in his nostrils? If we have not known the love of a child, no talking will ever make a man understand what a father's heart is. Religious experiences are not unlike ordinary human experiences in this matter. It is not possible to communicate them, partly by reason of the imperfection of human language, partly by reason that you need in all departments sympathy and prior knowledge in order to make the descriptions significant at all. And in our earthly life, though your faith and mine, and our joys and our consciousness of Christ's love are all weak and tremulous, as we know, still we cannot speak them full out, and if we could there are no ears to hear except the ears of those who are possessors of like precious faith. The law applies to the heavens as well. Not till we get there shall we know. The text seems to imply what is more wonderful still, that though there shall be no isolation in heaven, which is the perfection of society, there may be incommunicable depths of blessed experience even there. Each man standing at his own angle will see his own side of the light; it will be enough and the same for all, and yet different in each. "No man knoweth saving he that receiveth." We must possess to understand; we must stand before the throne to apprehend. III. THE CONDITION AND THE TRUE CAUSE OF POSSESSING THIS NEW NATURE. It comes as the reward of victory; it comes as a bestowment from Christ; "To him that overcometh will I give." And it seems to me that we have much need of trying to unite these two thoughts more closely together than we generally do. The victory is a condition. It is not anything more than a condition. The real cause is Christ's bestowment. I believe as thoroughly as any man can in the application of the idea of reward to Christian service, but I believe that this is a secondary idea, and that the primary one is "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." I believe that all outward discipline, and labour, and sorrows, and disappointments, and struggles, the efforts that we make after victory, that all these prepare Christians, and make us capable of receiving the gift. I believe that the gift comes only out of His infinite and undeserved, and God be thanked! inexhaustible forgiving goodness and mercy. The one is, if I may so say, the preparing of the cloth for the dye, and after that you have the application of the colour. No heaven except to the victor. The victor does not fight his way into heaven, but Christ gives it to him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) The new name:—1. A new name preaches to us of a new relationship. A child parts with its own name, and takes the name of the family into which it is received as an adopted son or daughter. "The Lord God shall call His servants by another name." 2. This new name is the declaration of sanctity. If we are children we should maintain the honour of the family name. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." 3. Dignity is expressed by a new name. Christianity bestows a name of rank and title that is emphatically "new"—above the human, above the angelic—Divine. 4. Secrecy belongs to this name. "A new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Our holiest and grandest emotions are those that stifle utterance. They seal the lips, and make us feel how inadequate are all human vehicles to express heavenly and Divine emotions. The pleasures of the worldling lie on the surface. "You have seen, it may be," says a writer, "an antique Italian painted window, with the bright Italian sunshine glowing through it. It is the special excellence of pictured glass that the light which falls merely on the outside of other pictures, is here interfused throughout the work, illuminating the design, and investing it with a living radiance. . . . Christian faith is a grand cathedral with Divinely pictured windows. Standing without you see no glory, nor can possibly imagine any. Nothing is visible but the merest outline of dusky shapes. Standing within all is clear and defined, every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendours." (*The London Pulpit.*)

The new name:—The giving of the white stone with the new name is the communication of what God thinks about the man to the man. It is the Divine judgment, the solemn holy doom of the righteous man, the "Come, thou blessed," spoken to the individual. In order to see this, we must first understand what is the idea of a name—that is, what is the perfect notion of a name. The true name is one which expresses the character, the nature, the being, the meaning of the person who bears it. It is the man's own symbol—his soul's picture, in a word—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone. For no one but God sees what the man is, or even, seeing what he is, could express in a name-word the sum and harmony of what he sees. To whom is this name given? To him that overcometh. When is it given? When he has overcome. Does God then not know what a man is going to become? As surely as He sees the oak which He put there lying in the heart of the acorn. Why then does He wait till the man has become by overcoming ere He settles what his name shall be? He does not wait; He knows his name from the first. It is only when the man has become his name that God gives him the stone with the name upon it, for then first can he understand what his name signifies. The name is one "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Not only then has each man his individual relation to God, but each man has his peculiar relation to God. He is to God a peculiar being, made after his own fashion, and that of no one else; for when he is perfected he shall receive the new name which no one else can understand. Hence he can worship God as no man else can worship him—can understand God as no man else can understand Him. This or that man may understand God more, may understand God better than he, but no other man can understand God as he understands Him. As the fir-tree lifts up itself with a far different need from the need of the palm-tree, so does each man stand before God, and lift up a different humanity to the common Father. And for each God has a different response. With every man He has a secret—the secret of the new name. In every man there is a loneliness, an inner chamber of peculiar life into which God only can enter. See, now, what a significance the symbolism of our text assumes. Each of us is a distinct flower or tree in the spiritual garden of God—precious, each for his own sake, in the eyes of Him who is even now making us—each of us watered and shone upon and filled with life, for the sake of his flower, his completed being, which will blossom out of him at last to the glory and pleasure of the great Gardener. For each has within him a secret of the Divinity; each is growing towards the revelation of that secret to himself, and so to the full reception, according to his measure, of the Divine. Every moment that he is true to his true self, some new shine of the white stone breaks on his inward eye, some fresh channel is opened upward for the coming glory of the flower, the conscious offering of his whole being in beauty to the Maker. Each man, then, is in God's sight of great worth. Life and action, thought and intent, are sacred. And what an end lies before us! To have a consciousness of our own ideal being flashed into us from the thought of God! (*George MacDonald, LL.D.*)

The third promise to the victors:—The Church at Pergamos, to which this promise is addressed, had a sharper struggle than fell to the lot of the two Churches whose epistles precede this. It was set "where Satan's seat is." The severer the struggle, the nobler the reward. I. We have THE VICTOR'S FOOD, the manna. That seems, at first sight, a somewhat infelicitous symbol, because manna was wilderness food. But that characteristic is not to be taken into account. Manna, though it fell in the wilderness, came from heaven, and it is the heavenly food that is suggested by the symbol. One moment the din of the battlefield, the next moment the refreshment of the heavenly manna. And the first thing that it plainly suggests to us is the absolute satisfaction of all the hunger of the heart. Here we have to suppress desires, sometimes because they are illegitimate and wrong, sometimes because circumstances sternly forbid their indulgence. There, to desire will be to have, and partly by the rectifying of the appetite, partly by the fulness of the supply, there will be no painful sense of vacuity. Then there is the other plain thing suggested here, that that satisfaction does not dull the edge of appetite or desire. Bodily hunger is fed, is replete, wants nothing more until the lapse of time and digestion have intervened. But it is not so with the loftiest satisfactions. You that know what happy love is know what that means—a satisfaction which never approaches satiety, a hunger which has in it no gnawing. Satisfaction without satiety, food which leaves him blessedly appetised for larger bestowments, belong to the victor. Another thing to be noticed here is what we have already had occasion to point out in the previous

promises: "I will give him." The victor is seated at the board, and the Prince, as in some earthly banquet to a victorious army, himself moves up and down amongst the tables, and supplies the wants of the guests. Christ Himself bestows upon His servants the sustenance of their spirits in the realm above. But there is more than that. Christ is not only the Giver, but He is Himself the Food. He said, "I am the Bread of God that came down from heaven." The man that lives upon the Christ by faith, love, obedience, imitation, communion, aspiration, here on earth, has already the earnest of that feast. If you do not like the earthly form of feeding upon Jesus Christ, which is trusting Him, obeying Him, thinking about Him, you would like less the heavenly form of that feeding upon Him.

II. Note, **THE VICTOR'S NEW NAME.** When we read, "I will give Him a stone, on which there is a new name written," we infer that the main suggestion made in that promise is of a change in the self, something new in the personality and the character. What new capacities may be evolved by the mere fact of losing the limitations of the bodily frame; what new points of contact with the new universe; what new analogues of that which we here call our senses, and means of perception of the external world, may be the accompaniments of the disembarassment from "the earthly house of this tabernacle," we dare not dream. But whatsoever be these changes, they are changes that repose upon that which has been in the past. And so the second thought that is suggested by this new name is that these changes are the direct results of the victor's course. Both in old times and in the peerage of England you will find names of conquerors, by land or by water, who carry in their designations and transmit to their descendants the memorial of their victories in their very titles. In like manner as Scipio was called Africanus, as a Jervis became Lord St. Vincent, so the victor's "new name" is the concentration and memorial of the victor's conquest. So once more we come to the thought that whatever there may be of change in the future, the main direction of the character remains, and the consolidated issues of the transient deeds of earth remain, and the victor's name is the summing up of the victor's life.

III. Lastly, note **THE MYSTERY OF BOTH THE FOOD AND THE NAME.** Both symbols point to the one thought, the impossibility of knowing until we possess and experience. That impossibility besets all the noblest, highest, purest, Divinest emotions, and possessions of earth. Poets have sung of love and sorrow from the beginning of time; but men must love to know what it means. Since, then, experience alone admits to the knowledge, how vulgar, how futile, how absolutely destructive of the very purpose which they are intended to subserve, are all the attempts of men to forecast that ineffable glory. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 18-29. **Thyatira.**—*Thyatira—the sentimental Church*:—One thing which Ephesus had Thyatira wanted, and it was a blessed want; nothing is said of Thyatira's "toil." The temper which animated the Church made all its service joyous. Therefore the Lord's commendation is so full and unreserved; He does not talk of removing the candlestick out of its place; instead He frankly recognises the growing efficiency of His servants: "I know that thy latest works are more than the first." Nevertheless there is a great and grievous lack. As in Ephesus, the mention of this defect is unqualified; not, "I have a few things against thee," nor, "I have this against thee," but, "I have against thee that thou art tolerating that woman Jezebel," &c. The name is a mystic one. Jezebel was the lady-wife of the half-barbarous king Ahab; the story of her reign is the story of the quick corruption and utter downfall of the kingdom of Israel. Idol-feasts were followed by "chambering and wantonness," and corruption spread rapidly among the youth of Israel. So was this prophetess introducing the speculations of Asiatic freethinkers and the Asiatic habit of voluptuousness into the Church of Thyatira. A love of talk about forbidden things was setting in; regard for law was being weakened; audacity was taking the place of reserve; the teaching spread that self-indulgence was nobler than self-denial, and more in accordance with the freedom of the gospel. There was a double attraction in the teaching of the prophetess—the subtle charm of womanhood, and the seductiveness of the thoughts themselves she was disseminating. Thus she led her votaries on into what they loved to call the "deeper aspects" of life and morals. We must observe that the Church is not charged with complicity in this teaching. Nor is the minister accused of sharing in the doctrine; the implication is that he is pure. But it is charged against him that he tolerates it; and both he and the Church are warned of their neglect of duty. Why is he so tolerant of this modern Jezebel—a woman who is working in the Church mischiefs

as subtle, and in their consequences as dire, as those which destroyed the manhood of Israel? First, doubtless, he bore with her because she was a woman. The gracious tolerance of a strong man often takes this form. It is very hard for such a one to assert himself at all; most hard where self-assertion seems most easy. Next, the woman called herself "a prophetess." Here comes in regard for "the freedom of prophecy"; the very inspiration of the Church was a hindrance. "Who knows whether God is not speaking by her, notwithstanding all that is suspicious in her teaching?" The very spirit of service might help to mislead a gracious man. Underneath the easy temper of the pastor of Thyatira there was, however, a grave deficiency, one of the gravest in a Church ruler: he had an inadequate sense of the authority of law. Thyatira stands before us the type of a sentimental Church; the charm and the danger of the sentimental temperament are both set before us here. There is a sentimentalism of the strong as well as of the weak. In the weak sentiment takes the place which belongs to conviction; they try to make feeling do the work of moral qualities. And they miserably fail; their Christian character itself degenerates; like the Amy of "Locksley Hall," they are doomed to "perish in their self-contempt." The strong are not in danger of this: their personal character may seem to keep itself unstained. But if they have responsibilities for others laid upon them, their sentimentalism may mean unfaithfulness. If Ephesus may be looked upon as typifying the peril of the Puritan habit, Thyatira is a type of what we may call Neo-Puritanism. The Puritan was the guardian of the claims and rights of the individual. He trusted his own conscience to see the will of God, his own intelligence to interpret it. In strenuous years the man of such a temper, and with this lofty ambition, tends to be hard, self-confident, a dogmatist in his thinking, a precisian in his conduct. He is the man who can try the spirits; who can tear aside disguises; can see through them who call themselves apostles when they are not, and can find them false. Times have grown easier; there has swept over us a great impulse of tenderness, which has become the prevailing habit, and the characteristic individualism of the Puritan has changed its form. Out of regard for the sanctity of the individual conscience and judgment, varying interpretations of God's law are to be received as binding on various persons; and where divers interpretations of law are admitted, the law itself ceases to be law. In the freedom which is to be allowed to self-development, the educative influence of positive enactments is gone; every man is to be his own schoolmaster as well as his own judge. I. THE APPEAL TO REALITY. In contrast with their readiness to be deluded, He sets out His own clear vision, piercing through all plausibilities, and detecting the heart of the matter; His fervid indignation, too, that will not long be restrained. Nothing is more needed than occasional plain speech about the foulness which lurks in much that professes to be an enlarged spirituality. There is more than an etymological connection between sentimentalism and sensuality. They who encourage display of the peculiar charms of womanhood, and seek to advance public causes by constant speech of things which both nature and piety tell us should be held in strict reserve, degrade the woman they seek to emancipate and brutalise the man. More than once the world has been startled by the announcement of "esoteric" teachings and practices among some who have posed as heralds of a higher morality, which differ not at all from the words and deeds of others who are frankly vicious. And what is still more startling is the discovery that some who have not accepted all the doctrines of their circle have known of the prevalence of them, and suffered them to pass without rebuke. These are really the coarse. II. THE APPEAL TO COMPASSION. "Behold," says the Lord, "I cast them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation"; "and I will kill her children with death." There were simple souls in Thyatira saved from moral ruin by their ignorance. They "knew not the deep things of Satan" which the initiated talked of. There were other simple ones who fell by their curiosity. It was the place of the pastor to stand between these and the Lord of the flaming eyes and the glowing feet; to save them from coming judgment by instruction, warning, if need were by discipline, "pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted with the flesh." It is a cruel thing to be tolerant of those who are destroying the souls of the unwary. III. THE APPEAL TO DUTY. "I lay upon you the charge to be faithful to the law you have received. I impose no other obligation on you. But this you have; hold it fast until I come." It was the duty of all in Thyatira; it was the special duty of "the angel of the Church." An unwelcome duty it might be, but not on that account less urgent. And it was enforced by the promise "to him that over-

cometh." God's rewards are of two classes. We are to have more of what we have; there is to be given us that which we have not. We think more habitually of the former class—"to him that hath shall be given"—but the Lord thinks also of the latter class, and this is well for us. For if we were only to go on enlarging and developing the graces most congenial to us, which we find it easiest to exercise, we might attain to excellence, but we should be ever one-sided men. God would make us perfect men. He will not let us keep the defects of our qualities. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *Christ's letter to the Church at Thyatira*:—I. THE COMMENDABLE IN CHARACTER. "I know thy works," &c. Its progressive excellence is here commended. "And the last to be more than the first." Several excellent things are here mentioned—"Charity," which is love. The one genuine principle has various manifestations. "Service," that is ministry. "Faith." By this I understand not belief in propositions, but universal and living confidence in God, Christ, and eternal principles. "Patience"—that is calm endurance of those evils over which we have no control. "Works"—all the practical developments of holy principles. II. THE REPREHENSIBLE IN DOCTRINE. Whatever was the particular doctrine that this prophetess taught, it was a great evil; it led to two things. 1. It led to great wickedness in conduct. (1) Licentiousness—"commit fornication." (2) Idolatry—"eat things sacrificed to idols." A corrupt doctrine will lead to a corrupt life. Creed and conduct have a vital connection with each other. 2. It incurred the displeasure of Christ. "Behold I will cast her into a bed," &c., &c. (1) A terrible retribution. The couch of indulgence would be changed into a bed of torture. (2) An enlightened retribution. "I am He which searcheth the reins and the hearts." There will be no ignorance in the dispensation of the punishment; the Judge knows all. (3) A righteous retribution. "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." III. THE INDISPENSABLE IN DUTY. What is to be done to correct these evils, and to avoid this threatened doom? 1. Repent of the wrong. Kind Heaven gives all sinners time for repentance, and unless repentance takes place punishment must come. 2. Hold fast to the right. (1) You have something good. You have some right views, right feelings, right principles; hold them fast. (2) This something you are in danger of losing. There are seductive influences around you in society. Error is a prophetess ever at work, seeking to rifle the soul of all good. (3) This something will be safe after Christ's advent. "Till I come." He will perfect all, put all beyond the reach of the tempter. Meanwhile hold fast. IV. THE BLESSED IN DESTINY. There are several glorious things here promised to the faithful and true. 1. Freedom from all future inconvenience. No other burden will be put on them. Freedom from evil, what a blessing! 2. Exaltation to authority. "To him I will give power over the nations." The Christian victor shall share in the dominion of Christ (1 Cor. vi. 2). 3. The possession of Christ. "I will give him the morning star," that is, I will give Myself to him, the light of life, the light that breaks upon the world after a night of darkness and tempest. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Thyatira*:—I. THE MAJESTY AND JUDICIAL ASPECTS OF ITS DIVINE AUTHOR. 1. His majesty—"Son of God." (1) Our Lord's resurrection; its grand and unanswerable demonstration (Rom. i. 4). (2) The title proof of His glory and Divinity (Heb. i. 2-8). 2. His judicial aspects. (1) Nothing can escape His piercing glance. (2) No one can escape His resistless power. II. HIS LOVING RECOGNITION OF EVERY COMMENDABLE QUALITY (ver. 19). III. HIS HOLY ABHORRENCE OF THE EVILS PERMITTED IN THE CHURCH (ver. 20). IV. HIS LOVING FORBEARANCE OF THIS WICKED PARTY (ver. 21). V. THE TERRIBLE DOOM THAT AWAITS THIS PARTY UNLESS THEY REPENT (vers. 22, 23). VI. OUR LORD'S INSPIRING WORDS TO THE FAITHFUL (ver. 24). 1. The importance of not giving heed to false doctrine. 2. The connection between false doctrine and the knowing "the depths of Satan." VII. THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRMLY HOLDING THE TRUTH AND GRACE OF CHRIST (ver. 25). VIII. THE BLESSED REWARD OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM (vers. 26-28). IX. OUR LORD'S EARNEST EXHORTATION TO THE CHURCHES (ver. 29). (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *The Church contaminated by doctrinal error*:—I. THIS CHURCH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN OF HIGH MORAL CHARACTER. 1. Fervent in its love. 2. Faithful in its service. 3. Constant in its faith. 4. Genuine in its patience. 6. Progressive in its excellences. II. THIS CHURCH, NOTWITHSTANDING ITS PREVIOUS HIGH MORAL CHARACTER, WAS CONTAMINATED BY DOCTRINAL ERROR THROUGH THE SEDUCTIVE INFLUENCE OF A CORRUPT WOMAN (ver. 20). 1. This Church was contaminated in doctrine by the teaching of a woman. (1) Of wicked name-sake. (2) Of vain pretensions. (3) Of corrupt morality. (4) Of seductive influence. 2. This Church, through its doctrinal error, was led into sinful

practices. 3. There is a contaminating influence in doctrinal error. III. THOSE WHO ARE INSTRUMENTAL IN LEADING A CHURCH INTO DOCTRINAL ERROR, AND ITS CONSEQUENT EVILS, ARE THREATENED WITH SEVERE RETRIBUTION (vers. 22, 23). LESSONS: 1. To cultivate in Church life an increase of all Christian graces. 2. To avoid vain and impious teachers who profess the prophetic gift. 3. That women should keep silence in the Church. 4. That doctrinal heresy will lead to an awful destiny. (*J. S. Exell M.A.*) **I know thy works and charity . . . and the last to be more than the first.**—*The first and last works*:—I. WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN LIFE IS MEANT TO BE. A life of continual progress in which each “to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant,” in reference to all that is good and noble. A continuous progress towards and in all good of every sort is the very law of the Christian life. Every metaphor about the life of the Christian soul carries the same lesson. Is it a building? Then course by course it rises. Is it a tree? Then year by year it spreads a broader shadow, and its leafy crown reaches nearer heaven. Is it a body? Then from childhood to youth, and youth to manhood, it grows. Christianity is growth, continual, all-embracing, and unending. II. WHAT A SADLY LARGE PROPORTION OF PROFESSEDLY CHRISTIAN LIVES ARE NOT. Many professing Christians are cases of arrested development, like some of those monstrosities that you see about our pavements—a full grown man in the upper part with no under limbs at all to speak of, aged half a century, and only half the height of a ten years old child. They grow, if at all, by fits and starts, after the fashion, say, of a tree that every winter goes to sleep, and only makes wood for a little while in the summer time. Or they do not grow even as regularly as that, but there will come sometimes an hour or two of growth, and then long dreary tracks in which there is no progress at all, either in understanding of Christian doctrine or in the application of Christian precept; no increase of conformity to Jesus Christ, no increase of realising hold of His love, no clearer or more fixed and penetrating contemplation of the unseen realities, than there used to be long, long ago. Let us learn the lesson that either to-day is better than yesterday or it is worse. If a man on a bicycle stands still he tumbles. The condition of keeping upright is to go onwards. If a climber on an Alpine ice-slope does not put all his power into the effort to ascend, he cannot stick at the place, at an angle of forty-five degrees upon the ice, but down he is bound to go. Unless, by effort, he overcomes gravitation, he will be at the bottom very soon. And so if Christian people are not daily getting better, they are daily getting worse. There are two alternatives before us. Either we are getting more Christlike or we are daily getting less so. III. HOW THIS COMMENDATION MAY BECOME OURS. Notice the context. Christ says, “I know thy works and love and faith and service” (or ministry), “and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.” That is to say, the great way by which we can secure this continual growth in the manifestations of Christian life is by making it a habit to cultivate what produces it, viz., these two things, charity (or love) and faith. These are the roots; they need cultivating. If they are not cultivated then their results of “service” (or “ministry”) and patience are sure to become less and less. These two, faith and love, are the roots; their vitality determines the strength and abundance of the fruit that is borne. If we want our works to increase in number and to rise in quality, let us see to it that we make an honest habit of cultivating that which is their producing cause—love to Jesus Christ and faith in Him. And then the text still further suggests another thought. At the end of the letter I read: “He that overcometh and keepeth My works to the end, to him will I give,” &c. Now, mark what were called “thy works” in the beginning of the letter are called “My works” in its close. If we want that the Master shall see in us a continuous growth towards Himself, then, in addition to cultivating the habit of faith and love, we must cultivate the other habit of looking to Him as the source of all the work that we do for Him. And when we have passed from the contemplation of our deeds as ours, and come to look upon all that we do of right and truth and beauty as Christ working in us, then there is a certainty of our work increasing in nobility and in extent. There is still another thing to be remembered, and that is, that if we are to have this progressive godliness we must put forth continuous effort right away to the very close. We come to no point in our lives when we can slack off in the earnestness of our endeavour to make more and more of Christ’s fulness our own. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel.**—*An imperfect Church*:—I. A SERIOUS CHARGE ALL’GED AGAINST THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA. The most perfect Church upon earth is very imperfect. A

seriously observant man will soon perceive "an end of all perfection" in the most excellent characters. All our Lord's descriptions of character are faithful. He never drew a false likeness. By Him neither excellences or imperfection were ever exaggerated. The design of the Holy Ghost in exposing the sins and imperfections of the people of God is to warn Christians of their danger, and to excite them to constant watchfulness and fervent prayer. The faithful reproof marks the line of conduct we are bound conscientiously to pursue in dealing with professors of the religion of Christ. II. DIVINE PATIENCE SPARES FOR A SEASON THE MOST ABANDONED AND GUILTY CHARACTERS. Justice might instantly inflict condign punishment upon licentious characters. III. TREMENDOUS JUDGMENTS WILL SUCCEED THE EXERCISE OF PATIENCE UPON THOSE WHO CONTINUE IMPENITENT. IV. OUR LORD ASSERTS HIS OMNISCIENCE AND HIS PREROGATIVE TO PUNISH AND REWARD MANKIND. V. THE EPISTLE CONCLUDES WITH EXHORTATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT ADDRESSED TO THOSE WHO HAD NOT APPROVED OF THE DOCTRINE OF JEZEBEL. (*J. Hyatt.*) *Inconsistency* :—Alas for our many inconsistencies, our varied imperfections; alas for the mischief they do to our own souls and to the cause of Christ everywhere! Up to a certain point, by the grace of God and a steadfast will, we have done, let us suppose, pretty well. We have gained something. But the difficulty is to get on a little farther. Conscience has always a few things against us which we cannot quite conquer—very unimportant, perhaps, according to the world's judgment, and yet, we know, very contrary to the Spirit of Christ. We ought to be humble, and we are proud. We ought to be grave, and we are frivolous. We ought to be exact in our times of prayer, and we suffer all manner of things to interrupt us. We ought to be overflowing with kindness; and we are reserved, impatient, and unsympathising. It is well for us if we can perceive our inconsistencies and try to amend them. The devil does his best to keep our attention fixed on what we have gained. Our inconsistencies, whatever they may appear to us, are spots and blemishes in the soul, disfiguring that image of Christ into which we desire to be transformed, holding us back from God only knows what higher degrees of perfection, spoiling the offering of our life, keeping back a part of the spoil. Moreover, it is by these inconsistencies that the devil gains power over us in other ways. These are his stations which he seizes and fortifies, establishing on them his engines of war, from which he hurls his fiery darts of temptation so as to overcome our defence in the matter of some kindred fault, and to throw in other forces of his own as soon as the breach is opened. And who shall tell the disheartening effect upon ourselves of these inconsistencies? So much for the effect of our inconsistency on ourselves. And what shall we say of its effect upon the world at large? There is nothing which does the devil's work half so well as the unholy life combined with great profession. (*W. Mitchell, M.A.*) *The Jezebel of Thyatira* proceeded in the same way as all do who succeed in making havoc of the Church of Christ. She came under the semblance of religion; she pretended to be inspired of God; and she appears to have gained such credit with the bishop himself that he was beguiled by her enticing words, and suffered her to teach; this was his sin. Now it is evident when we read the character of this man that he had not lent himself knowingly to any wicked designs of the false prophetess. What does this show but our constant liability to error, even though we should be exalted to the highest station in the Church of Christ? We may be compromising our high and evangelical principles by unworthy and undignified concession to the errors of others, as effectually as did those deceived Christians of Thyatira; and there will never be wanting a Jezebel or a doctrine which that name will denote to assure us that it is right so to do, and that we thereby gain a universal esteem which will help us to extend our own particular views and influence. But, besides this practice, the false prophetess had a doctrine, and it is characterised by "the depths of Satan." Our Lord pronounces the things whereof Jezebel and her followers made their boast to be deep, but they were not the deep things of God, but of Satan; there is a spirit which searcheth the mysteries of godliness; and there is a spirit which is busy in diving into the depths of evil under the pretension of seeking out causes, until it becomes what may be termed mysticism. The false prophetess, no doubt, led her votaries to believe that some other revelation than what was in God's Word had been made to her, and professed to communicate some superior light on the deepest and most intricate points of faith. Generally speaking, when error is worked into a system, it must have an air of mystery thrown around it, and be supposed to conceal something which cannot meet the vulgar eye or be known to the uninitiated. Nothing but truth will bear an open investigation; truth is the

only system that may be committed with safety to a whole community; not that it will be so safe as never to be perverted, but it will finally triumph, and requires neither secret machinery nor open violence to force it on men's minds. Beware of an inordinate love of speculation on the nature and counsels of the Most High; deep things, though most alluring, are not the best elements for the health of the soul, and very few who have exercised themselves much therein have been able to maintain a spirit of sobriety unto the end. Let us beware of a tendency to begin our inquiries where all wise men make an end. Let us seek to be wise up to the word, not beyond it; and thus keeping our hearts in all simplicity we shall soon learn to whom the Father reveals His mysteries, and we shall retain an unclouded judgment to approve things that are excellent, and to discuss with patience and candour.

2. The other lesson to be learnt from this history regards the discipline and ordinances of the Church. The deluded followers of the false prophetess had set at nought the discipline of the overseers of the Church for the time being, apparently esteeming it a burden not to be tolerated by them who pretended to such great gifts. God, however, is not a God of confusion but of order, and was careful to confirm that burden and thereby to give His sanction to discipline. (*R. Burgess, B.D.*)

Jezebel to be cast out of the Church:—Why they did not insist upon having this Jezebel turned out of the Church appears exceedingly strange. Perhaps she was a woman of wealth and riches, of some note and rank in Thyatira. There are few Churches so exactly apostolic as to pursue a strict impartiality. The gold ring and the gay clothing goes a great way. A woman, whether she was a prophetess or not, provided she had some thousands a year, and knew how to apply it among her friends, might be guilty of a great many peccadillos and have them winked at, when one of low degree could not escape censure for the first trip. There is something bewitching in riches and worldly dignity—they make mankind do very absurd and inconsistent things, and even New Testament Churches have been fascinated therewith. Perhaps this prophetess would have been accounted a good Christian in these soft, good-natured times when divorces are so common. She would probably have endowed a church, entertained the clergy, like a good Christian and orthodox believer; and this would cover a multitude of sins. But Christ does not judge as men do, for He looks into the heart and sees that many specious actions are only intended as a cover to conceal other designs than those that are pretended publicly. There is no imposing upon Him that searches the hearts. It is a great mercy that the Church has such an Head, who knows all things, and discerns all characters, and will not suffer sin to pass without rebuke. (*J. Murray.*)

Sins of omission:—It is a fault, then, not only to be active in evil, but to be passive of evil. (*J. Trapp.*)

Jezebel a type of worldliness:—Jezebel was a heathen princess, the first heathen queen who had been married by a king of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was, therefore, peculiarly fitted to represent the influences of the world; and the charge against the first Church of the second group is that she tolerated the world with its heathen thoughts and practices. She knew it to be the world that it was, but notwithstanding this she was content to be at peace, perhaps even to ally herself with it. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*)

And I gave her space to repent.—*A timely period:*—God is the great giver; He gives life and food and happiness to all His creatures. I. A DEFINITION OF TIME. Some call time the measure of duration; others the succession of ideas, pearls strung upon a golden thread. But is not this as good as either—"space to repent?" II. A LIMITATION OF MERCY. "Space," a definite period of time. Man's "days are determined" (Job xiv. 5).

1. How rash the calculations of the sinner. 2. How simple the reckoning of the saint (Gen. xlvii. 9; Job xiv. 14; 1 Cor. vii. 29).

III. A DECLARATION OF DUTY. "Repent." IV. A FORESHADOWING OF DESTINY. Man is related to eternity. (*Homilist.*)

Time for repentance:—I. DIVINELY ALLOTTED. 1. The wealth of Divine mercy. 2. Man will have no excuse if finally lost. II. CERTAINLY LIMITED. Then use it well, prize it highly, see that the Divine purpose concerning your destiny is accomplished. III. WILFULLY NEGLECTED. 1. Because their minds are darkened. 2. Because their hearts are insensible. 3. Because their retributions are delayed. IV. ETERNALLY RUINOUS. Lessons: 1. We are Divinely called to repentance. 2. We should repent now, because now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Space to repent:—"In space comes grace" proves not always a true proverb. They that defer the work, and say that men may repent hereafter, say truly, but not safely. The branch that bears not timely fruit is cut off (John xv. 2). The ground

that yields not a seasonable and suitable return is nigh unto cursing (Heb. vi. 8). (John Trapp.) I will give unto every one of you according to your works.—*Self-prepared penalties*.—My children, if you saw a man prepare a great pile of wood, heaping up fagots one upon another, and when you asked him what he was doing, he were to answer you, “I am preparing the fire that is to burn me,” what would you think? And if you saw this same man set fire to the pile, and when it was lighted, throw himself upon it, what would you say? This is what we do when we commit sin. (G. Vianney.) *The depths of Satan*.—This is not the name which these persons gave to the doctrines they held, but the real character they deserved. Mankind have always been fond of depths and mysteries, and more disposed to adhere to things which they do not understand, than to simple and plain truths that are more plain and obvious. It would appear to have been one of the particular stratagems of the wicked one to persuade mankind that Divine revelation is beyond the understanding of the inferior ranks of Church members, and that they must depend for their direction how to understand them, upon some select commissioners that are initiated in the secrets thereof. The depths of Satan differ from all things that may be called depths in the Word of God, in the following particulars. 1. Satan appoints trustees to keep the key of his secrets, and does not show an index to the mysteries which are in his system. But there are no mysteries in the Word of God, but what have a key to open them, and an index to point them out. 2. The interpretation of Scripture mysteries is always shorter, and expressed in fewer words, than the mysteries themselves. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar’s great image pointed out himself in a mystery; the interpretation was short, and yet exceedingly plain. The depths and mysteries of Satan are quite different; the mystery is short, but the interpretation long, and the opening of the mystery very tedious. 3. The depths of God are always opened up by the Spirit of God, in the course of Divine revelation, and without the interpretation of the Holy Ghost, who is the original author, all the art of men and angels could not develop one single emblem in either the Old or New Testament, with any degree of certainty. The depths of Satan are like Milton’s Darkness Visible, incapable of any consistent interpretation, nor are they ever intended to be understood. They are believed because they are inscrutable, and on that account require a large measure of faith. But what God reveals, the nature and character thereof is plain, though the measure is unfathomable. 4. These doctrines, which John calls the depths of Satan, appear to have been the dogmas of men, and the conceits of sophisters in religion, which were intended to render godliness more fashionable and agreeable to the taste of corrupt professors; and they differed from the simplicity of the gospel in the ease they promised to those who embraced them. (J. Murray.) But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.—*A little religion is worth retaining*.—I. HOLD FAST THAT WHICH YOU HAVE, BECAUSE IT IS WORTH RETAINING. 1. Because of the means which God has employed to put you in the possession of it. 2. Because it is connected with the salvation of your soul. 3. Because the minutest portion of it is valuable, and is capable of unlimited increase. When the whole substance is composed of gold and silver and precious stones, intrinsic value belongs to every particle and to every grain, so that its very dust is carefully preserved. And so it is with all the impressions and feelings which belong to true religion, for they are fruits of the Spirit, and portions of the ways of the unsearchable God. The mariner does not throw away the little light which shines upon him from the polar star, but retains it in his eye till it has guided his vessel into port. And though in some periods of your religious experience, Jesus Christ may not appear to you in His full tide of glory, as the Sun of Righteousness, yet if He appears to you in the feebler beams of the morning star, ever remember that what you see, though but a glimmering, still is light, real heavenly light. Hold it, therefore, in your view. If you possessed but one single grain of wheat, its intrinsic value would be trifling; but how is its value enhanced, and with what care will it be preserved, when you know that if it be sown and reaped, and sown and reaped again, its production will soon be seen waving in the valleys, and crowning the mountain tops, till it has furnished food sufficient for a city, a continent, a world. And who can set limits to the increase of grace? Who can tell what advances he may make in knowledge, in holiness, and in joy, who is now for the first time sitting at the feet of Jesus? II. HOLD FAST THAT WHICH YOU HAVE, BECAUSE VARIOUS EFFORTS ARE MADE TO DEPRIVE YOU OF IT. 1. Such efforts are made by our own evil propensities. As the guards and the cultivators of that which we have, there must be vigilance and

resistance and persevering prayer; there must be a war continually waged against evil thoughts, evil propensities, and evil actions; and there must be an unceasing and determined effort to bring the whole soul under the supreme dominion of gospel principles and of gospel influences. 2. Such efforts are made by the world. The mere presence of material and worldly objects has a tendency to divert our attention and our affections from those objects which are spiritual and unseen. The quantity of time and thought and labour which worldly business receives, from both the master and the servant, is often unfavourable, and sometimes fatal to fervency of spirit. 3. Such efforts are made by Satan. III. HOLD FAST THAT WHICH YOU HAVE, BECAUSE THE GOSPEL FURNISHES YOU WITH THE MEANS OF RETAINING IT. 1. The gospel furnishes you with the examples of righteous men, who have retained their spiritual possessions even in the midst of multiplied difficulties and dangers. 2. The gospel promises the Holy Spirit to help your infirmities, and to make your strength equal to your day. IV. HOLD FAST THAT WHICH YOU HAVE, BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST IS APPROACHING. 1. This announcement, you perceive, prescribes the term of your endurance. It is to continue till the Lord comes. The oath which Christ requires from us, when we enter His service, is an oath of fidelity for life; and, in this respect, Christ's requirements accord with the dispositions of all His faithful servants. They desire to persevere. They pray that they may persevere. 2. The announcement that Christ is coming affords great encouragement to sustain your endurance; for He is coming to receive His people to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. And as the shipwrecked mariner is encouraged to hold fast the rope which he has grasped, when he hears that the lifeboat is coming to convey him to the shore, so be you strengthened and encouraged by the announced approaching of your Lord, who even now is walking on the waters to conduct you to the desired haven. (*J. Alexander.*) *Christian excellence.*—I. Christian excellence is an ATTAINMENT. 1. Christian excellence is an attainment in contradistinction to a native growth. It does not spring up in the soul as an indigenous germ. It is a seed that has been taken in and cultivated. 2. Christian excellence is an attainment in contradistinction to an impartation. In a sense, it is the gift of God; not in the sense in which life and light and air and the seasons of the year are the gifts of God, blessings that come upon us irrespective of our own efforts, but rather in the sense in which the crops of the husbandman, the learning of the scholar, the triumphs of the artist, are the gifts of God—blessings that come as the result of appropriate labour. We shall grow neither good nor be made good; we must become good; we must struggle after it. II. Christian excellence is an attainment that REQUIRES FAST HOLDING. 1. Because it is worth retaining. Its value will appear by considering three things. (1) The priceless instrumentality employed to put man in possession of it: the mission of Christ. (2) Its essential connection with man's spiritual well-being; there is no true happiness apart from it. (3) Its capability of unlimited progress; it may be as a grain of mustard, but it can grow. 2. Because there is a danger of losing it. (1) Men who have had it have lost it before now. (2) Agencies are in constant operation here that threaten its destruction. III. Christian excellence is an attainment that will be placed BEYOND DANGER AT THE ADVENT OF CHRIST. 1. He comes to every Christian at death. 2. When He thus comes—(1) He crushes for ever our enemies. He bruises the head of Satan under our feet. (2) He removes from us everything inimical to the growth of goodness. (3) He introduces us into those heavenly scenes where there will be nothing but what ministers to the advancement of goodness. Take heart, Christian, the struggle is not for long. (*Homilist.*) *Hold fast the good obtained.*—I. THERE IS SOMETHING "WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY"; LET US INQUIRE WHAT IT IS. First, have we obtained pardoning mercy? Secondly, have we obtained justifying grace? Thirdly, there is sanctifying power. Fourthly, suppose freedom and comfort in the ways of God. Fifthly, suppose a sweet sense of the love of God in the soul. Lastly, have you obtained an interest in the promises? II. Supposing, then, that we have something, "HOLD FAST." And this is opposed to those who turn round and go back, or who turn aside and go astray. Let there be an advancement and progress in holiness, in zeal, in love, in conformity to Christ's image. When it is said, "hold fast," it implies that there are certain fixed and determinate principles of truth, which we are on no account to let go. There is a "form of sound words," which is not to be relinquished. The dignity of Christ, the efficacy of His sacrifice, the triumph of His mediation, the fact of His advent and coming again in glory, we are to give up only with our lives. "Hold it fast" implies that there are certain means and instrumentalities

to be employed. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Consider what you will lose, if you hold not fast the things which you have already obtained. And, again, if you lose what is gained, the dishonour and shame are greater than before. (*J. Stratten.*) *Christian steadfastness*:—"Hold fast." Here, as constantly, a material image is used to set forth a spiritual act, or rather a life-long series of spiritual acts, indicated by the continuous act "hold fast." It implies, too, that there is something to lay hold of, and what that is is referred to beforehand, "that which ye have already." By this we should probably understand all that is included in "the faith once delivered to the saints"; "the sum total," as it has been expressed, "of Christian doctrine, and hopes, and privileges." How much that is! The laws of Christ, they are to be held fast, not one forgotten or neglected; the promises of Christ, they are to be held fast, not one forgotten or neglected; the helps of Christ, they are all of them to be held fast, and used in the varied and continued necessities of this mortal life of temptation. To hold all these fast may be summed up as holding Him fast, as our Divine Lawgiver and Redeemer, our great Priest and Sacrifice, our in-dwelling Spirit and life. We do not need to ask for a Christ of higher endowments and larger resources; it is enough for us to hold fast the Christ we have already, "who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "Hold fast till I come." The thoughts suggested by the words "hold fast" are very different from those suggested by "I come." "Hold fast" tells of the struggles of earth; "I come" tells of the serene and abiding peace which reigns where Jesus is. "Hold fast till I come." The earthly effort till the heavenly reward. The strenuous life-effort, weary, protracted, often seeming doubtful in result, is to continue till Christ comes, up to the hour of that supreme disclosure, but not beyond it. Then the weary hands may relax their painful effort, the weary eyes their outlook for danger, the weary heart its patience of hope, for the security and rest of victory will have come. (*T. M. Herbert, M.A.*) *Hold fast*:—"Tug for it with those that would take it from you. (*J. Trapp.*) And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him I will give power over the nations.—*The service of God—to be constant*:—"Look at yon miller on the village hill. How does he grind his grist? Does he bargain that he will only grind in the west wind, because its gales are so full of health? No, but the east wind, which searches joints and marrows, makes the mill-stones revolve, and together with the north and the south it is yoked to his service. Even so should it be with you who are true workers for God; all your ups and your downs, your successes and your defeats, should be turned to the glory of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The promises to the victors*:—I. We have THE VICTOR'S AUTHORITY. Now, the promise in my next text is moulded by a remembrance of the great words of the second psalm. The psalm in question deals with that Messianic hope under the symbols of an earthly conquering monarch, and sets forth His dominion as established throughout the whole earth. And our letter brings this marvellous thought, that the spirits of just men made perfect are, somehow or other, associated with Him in that campaign of conquest. And so, notice, that whatever may be the specific contents of such a promise as this, the general form of it is in full harmony with the words of the Master whilst He was on earth. Our Lord gave His trembling disciples this great promise: "In the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things"; and, linked along with the promise of authority, the assurance of union with the Master: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." My text adds to that the image of a conquering campaign, of a sceptre of iron crushing down antagonism, of banded opposition broken into shivers, "as a potter's vessel" dashed upon a pavement of marble. The New Testament teaching converges upon this one point, that the Christ that came to die shall come again to reign, and that He shall reign and His servants with Him. That is enough; and that is all. But all the other promises deal not with something in the remoter future, but with something that begins to take effect the moment the dust, and confusion, and garments rolled in blood, of the battle-field, are swept away. At one instant the victors are fighting, at the next they are partaking of the Tree of Life. There must be something in the present for blessed dead, as well as for them in the future. And this is, that they are united with Jesus Christ in His present activities, and through Him, and in Him, and with Him, are even now serving Him. The servant, when he dies, and has been fitted for it, enters at once on his government of the ten cities. Thus this

promise of my text, in its deepest meaning, corresponds with the deepest needs of a man's nature. For we can never be at rest unless we are at work; and a heaven of doing nothing is a heaven of *ennui* and weariness. This promise of my text comes in to supplement the three preceding. They were addressed to the legitimate wearied longings for rest and fullness of satisfaction for oneself. This is addressed to the deeper and nobler longing for larger service. And the words of my text, whatever dim glory they may partially reveal, as accruing to the victor in the future, do declare that when he passes beyond the grave there will be waiting for him nobler work to do than any that he ever has done here. But let us not forget that all this access of power and enlargement of opportunity are a consequence of Christ's royalty and Christ's conquering rule. That is to say, whatever we have because we have knit to Him, and all our service there, as all our blessedness here, flows from our union with that Lord. Whatever there lies in the heavens, the germ of it all is this, that we are as Christ, so closely identified with Him that we are like Him, and share in all His possessions. He says to us, "All Mine is thine."

II. Note THE VICTOR'S STARRY SPLENDOUR. "I will give him the morning star." Now, no doubt, throughout Scripture a star is a symbol of royal dominion; and many would propose so to interpret it in the present case. But it seems to me that whilst that explanation—which makes the second part of our promise simply identical with the former, though under a different garb—does justice to one part of the symbol, it entirely omits the other. But the emphasis is here laid on "morning" rather than on "star." Then another false scent, as it were, on which interpretations have gone, seems to me to be that, taking into account the fact that in the last chapter of the Revelation our Lord is Himself described as "the bright and morning star," they bring this promise down simply to mean "I will give him Myself." Now, though it be quite true that, in the deepest of all views, Jesus Christ Himself is the gift as well as the giver of all these seven-fold promises, yet the propriety of representation seems to me to forbid that He should here say "I will give them Myself!" So that I think we are just to lay hold of the thought—the starry splendour, the beauty and the lustre that will be poured upon the victor is that which is expressed by this symbol here. What that lustre will consist in it becomes us not to say. That future keeps its secret well, but that it shall be the perfecting of human nature up to the most exquisite height of which it is capable, and the enlargement of it beyond all that human experience here can conceive, we may peaceably anticipate and quietly trust. Only note the advance here on the previous promises is as conspicuous as in the former part of this great promise. There the Christian man's influence and authority were set forth under the emblem of regal dominion. Here they are set forth under the emblem of lustrous splendour. It is the spectators that see the glory of the beam that comes from the star. And this promise, like the former, implies that in that future there will be a field in which perfected spirits may ray out their light, and where they may gladden and draw some eyes by their beams. Christian souls, in the future, as in the present, will stand forth as the visible embodiments of the glory and lustre of the unseen God. Further, remember that this image, like the former, traces up the royalty to communion with Christ, and to impartation from Him. "I will give him the morning star." We are not suns, but planets, that move round the Sun of Righteousness, and flash with His beauty.

III. Lastly, mark THE CONDITION OF THE AUTHORITY, AND THE LUSTRE. Here I would say a word about the remarkable expansion of the designation of the victor, to which I have already referred: "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end." We do not know why that expansion was put in, in reference to Thyatira only, but if you will glance over the letter you will see that there is more than usual about works; works to be repented of, or works which make the material of a final retribution and judgment. Bring your metaphor of a victor down to the plain, hard, prose fact of doing Christ's work right away to the end of life. It is the explanation of the victory, and one that we all need to lay to heart. "My works." That means the works that He enjoins. No doubt; but look at the verse before my text: "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." That is, the works that you do, and Christ's works are not only those which He enjoins, but those of which He Himself set the pattern. He will "give according to works"; He will "give authority"; "give the morning star." That is to say, the life which has been moulded according to Christ's pattern, and shaped in obedience to Christ's commandments is the life which is capable of being granted participation in His dominion, and invested with the morning star. It is for us to choose whether we shall share in Christ's dominion

or be crushed by His iron sceptre. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Power over the nations*.—I. POWER IS IN MANY CASES THE RESULT OF CONQUEST. Even in this life victory brings new strength. Physical force is attained by a long series of efforts. The blacksmith's brawny, sinewy arm is the natural consequence of years of vigorous strokes upon the anvil. Intellectual strength grows in the same way. It is in great measure acquired by mental application, and comes from painful, persevering endeavours to master some of the branches of art or science. This is a law of our being, the great principle, according to which the All-wise and Almighty Ruler of the world dispenses His gifts. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the same method applied to the highest and noblest kind of power, known as moral and spiritual. The ability to refuse the evil and choose the good, as well as to lead others to do the same, is indeed a special gift of God's grace, and yet it is the result of constant, persevering effort. In short, this promise to Thyatira is being continually fulfilled in the present life. II. At the same time, FOR ITS LARGEST AND TRUEST ACCOMPLISHMENT WE MUST LOOK ON TO THE GRAND AND GLORIOUS FUTURE. It is to him that shall have overcome, and kept Christ's works to the end, that He here promises power over the nations. "The royalties of Christ," remarks Archbishop Trench, "shall by reflection and communication be the royalties also of His Church. They shall reign, but only because Christ reigns, and because He is pleased to share His dignity with them. (*W. Burnet, M.A.*) I will give him the morning star.—*Christ, the Morning Star* (compared with chap. xxii. 16).—In seeking to interpret these words in the second chapter, some have supposed that the "morning star" is not directly connected with Christ; but that the promise is only a general one, setting forth the splendour of the reward of believers. Upon this principle there would be the same blessing promised to the Church of Thyatira under two forms: rule over the nations, and the splendour of such an inheritance here and hereafter. Had our Lord meant to display the splendour of the Christian's reward, He would have spoken of making His people like the morning star, rather than of giving them the morning star; hence I agree with those who understand Christ to promise that He will give Himself to His faithful ones as their portion and reward. But it is plain that Christ will not for the first time become the morning star to His people when He bestows Himself as their final reward, since He is so already in the present life; and hence we must understand Him as promising to give Himself in a higher measure as the reward of their fidelity. I. I remark THAT CHRIST IS TO HIS PEOPLE THE MORNING STAR OF TIME, AND WILL BE TO THEM THE MORNING STAR OF ETERNITY, BECAUSE HIS LIGHT SHINES AFTER DARKNESS. It belongs to the day star to appear in the midst of gloom when the shades of night are still thick and heavy, and to announce their departure. It was in this sense that Christ came as the light of the world. There was a general sense in which the whole world sat in darkness, as it does still where Christ is not known. "Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people." Take the altar at Athens, to which Paul appealed. If we understand its inscription as to "The Unknown God," did not this proclaim God at large as still unknown? When Christ came the world was in the darkness of guilt, with only light enough to read the sentence of conscience, but none to see how it could be reversed. There was the darkness of depravity, for in the night the "beasts of the forest walked abroad," and foul and hideous lusts degraded every land. These causes produced a darkness of untold misery. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Similar to this first coming of Christ into the world is His first appearing in His saving character to individual sinners. Every sinner to whom Christ has not thus appeared walks in darkness. Let him at length be aroused by the Spirit of God, and how awful is the sense of darkness that overwhelms him! The experience of Christians, indeed, is various. Some have more memory of this darkness than others. Some wander in it longer and plunge into it more deeply. Such is the first grand deliverance from darkness which Christ works for all His people, and which during their earthly history He constantly renews when the clouds of ignorance, the shades of guilt, and the storms of afflictions might gather around them. And now in the second of our texts He promises, as the reward of their faith and loyalty, that He will give Himself to each of them as the morning star of eternity. Here too the emblem shall be fulfilled, for His light will shine after darkness. To every Christian, the brightest, the happiest, the most devoted, there is a sense in which life ends in darkness. The passage from time into eternity is a dark passage. The Christian must enter it alone, and pursue it, it may be, with failing eye and fainting step. There is no night

so deep as that of the valley of the shadow of death. But here the last victory over darkness is achieved. "Light is thus sown in the righteous" when the departing spirit is gathered home. And when the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the mighty shadow of the judgment throne falls even upon the redeemed in awe and solemn dread, shall not this bright and morning star rest upon the head of Him who is at once their Judge and Advocate, so that they shall "rise to meet Him, free of fear"? Now has come a world of which it is written, "And there shall be no night there," "the Lord God giveth them light, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

II. I remark, THAT CHRIST IS TO HIS PEOPLE THE MORNING STAR OF TIME, AND WILL BE TO THEM THE MORNING STAR OF ETERNITY, BECAUSE HIS LIGHT TRANSCENDS ALL COMPARISON. No one can mistake the morning star in the firmament or confound it with any other orb. It shines pre-eminent and alone. In the words of Milton, it "flames in the forehead of the morning sky." Thus it is with Christ. 1. Christ is pre-eminent in His titles. Some of these are shared with others; but what a stamp of peculiarity is set upon them as applied to Christ! Is He the Son of God? Then He is His "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father." Is He the Angel of God? Then He is "made so much better than the angels, as He hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than they." Is He the Mediator? Then He is "the one Mediator between God and men." Is He the Saviour? Then there is salvation in no other, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." 2. Christ is pre-eminent in His offices. As a Prophet, He brings revelation from the highest heaven. As a Priest, He offers the alone and perfect sacrifice. As a King, He is without example. 3. Christ is pre-eminent in His history. To Him all history converges, and in His own it is summed up and transcended. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley; He is the Pearl of Great Price; He is the Plant of Renown; He is the Bread of Life; He is the precious Corner-stone. 4. What Christ is to His people, He is alone. We have many friends, but only one Redeemer; many earthly helpers, but only One who delivers our souls from the lowest hell. The succour that we receive from others in the things of salvation, so far from disturbing Christ's pre-eminence, only confirms it. The unity which the soul of man receives through Christ is as great a proof of adaptation and design as anything in the outer world. The heart of man needs something to engross it, an object on which it can concentrate all its affections without self-reproach, and which by its admitted sway brings unity into its existence, and concord into all its purposes and aspirations. Now as Christ has fulfilled this end in time, so shall He yet more by His gloriously asserted and devoutly recognised pre-eminence fulfil it to endless ages. His supremacy shall then be disclosed as on earth, in its brightest manifestation, it never yet has been. The morning star shall then shine forth unsullied by a cloud. What new displays of grace and glory Christ in these new circumstances shall make, it is not given to us to know. And while the morning star shall thus emit new and dazzling rays, oh, how different the impression of delight and rapture which His pre-eminence shall make then on His own people from what it made here! Then there shall be no darkness of ignorance or unbelief to hide His beams—no sin, or world, or self, to divide the heart with Him—no creature worship to impair His ascendancy—no coldness and lukewarmness even in the Church to damp the rising flame of love and adoration! Love and adoration shall be spontaneous and irresistible.

III. I remark, THAT CHRIST IS THE MORNING STAR OF TIME, AND WILL BE THE MORNING STAR OF ETERNITY, BECAUSE HIS LIGHT USHERS IN PERPETUAL DAY. It is the property of the morning star to be the day's harbinger. Other stars rise and shine and set, and leave the darkness still behind them. Hence Christ is not compared to the evening star, though it be in itself as bright as that of the morning, and indeed the same; because in that case the associations would be too gloomy, and the victory would seem to remain for a time on the side of darkness. True, the Christian may be in darkness even after Christ has risen upon him, but it is only "the cloudy and dark day"—it is no more "the black and dark night." The dawn may be overcast, but the day still proceeds. Day still penetrates through the crevices of your unbelief into the dungeon of your despondency; and you are startled in your self-made gloom and solitude by rays that travel from beyond the icy atmosphere from a higher luminary, though you refuse to go forth to them. (*J. Cairns, D.D.*)

The morning star :—He who speaks is Jesus Himself. 1. He speaks as a promiser. It is to something future that He points the eye of His Churches—the things "not seen," the "things hoped for." 2. He speaks as a giver. "I will give." He has been a giver from the first. 3. He speaks to the overcomers. Though the gifts are

not wages, yet they depend on our winning a battle. They are something beyond mere salvation. 4. He speaks of the morning star. This is His promised gift, and a very glorious one it is. (1) What it is naturally. It is not any star that appears in the morning, but one—one "bright particular star"—a star which, above all others, is known for its splendour, and is connected with the departure of the night and the arrival of the day. It says, Night is done: day is coming; the sun is about to rise. (2) What it is symbolically. Christ Jesus—He is the Star. He is the giver and the gift; as if He said, "I will give him Myself as the morning star." Bright and fair to look upon; attractive and glorious; joy of the traveller, or the sailor, or the night-watch. (3) What it is prophetically. We get Christ, in believing, just now, but we do not get Him as the morning star. That is yet to come. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.—*That the terms of salvation are offered to all men*:—These words are a strong and general appeal to the reason and understanding of all unprejudiced and impartial men. 1. The phrase, "Let him hear," is an authoritative expression, becoming the majesty of God, and the weight and dignity of what is spoken by His command. And if they refuse or neglect to hear, and will be at no pains to examine into the true nature and end of religion, it is no hurt to Him, but to themselves only. 2. As these words express the authority of God, in requiring men to attend, so they do further denote His goodness likewise, in proposing to men, universally and plainly, the doctrine and the way of life. 3. The other phrase in the text, "He that hath an ear," signifies he that hath understanding, that hath ability, that hath capacity to apprehend what is spoken (*Matt. xix. 12*). To have an ear, in the Scripture-sense, means to have an understanding free and unprejudiced, open to attend unto, and apt to receive the truth. And the want of it is not like the want of natural parts and abilities, pitiable and compassionate, but faulty and deserving of severe reproof (*Mark viii. 17, 18*). 4. The capacity men have, and the indispensable obligation they are under, to hearken to and obey what God delivers to them. I. GOD, THE GREAT CREATOR AND RIGHTEOUS GOVERNOR AND MERCIFUL JUDGE OF THE WHOLE EARTH, OFFERS TO ALL MEN THE GRACIOUS TERMS AND POSSIBILITIES OF SALVATION. God speaks to men originally, by the light of nature, by the order and proportions of things, by the voice of reason, by the dictates of conscience. II. THIS OFFER, THOUGH GRACIOUSLY MADE TO ALL, YET IN EVENT BECOMES EFFECTUAL TO THOSE ONLY WHO ARE QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE TO RECEIVE IT. Light introduced upon any object supposes always that there be eyes to view and to discern it by that light. The sound of a voice, or the use of speech, supposes always that men have ears to hear what the speaker uttereth. And, in matters of religion, God's offering to men certain terms or conditions of salvation supposes in like manner a certain moral disposition in the mind, which causes it to have a regard to things of that nature, to have a sense and relish of things relating to morality; otherwise men would, in their nature, be no more capable of religion than beasts. 1. That disposition of mind which qualifies men to receive the terms of salvation is somewhat which the Scripture always speaks of as a matter of singular excellency, and worthy of great commendation. It is an eminent gift, or grace, of God. 2. Wherein consists this excellent temper and disposition of mind. (1) Attentiveness or consideration. (2) A delight in examining into truth and light, a taking pleasure at all times in beholding the light and in hearing the voice of reason. (3) Moral probity, sincerity, and integrity of mind. (4) A readiness to hearken to the voice of revelation as well as of reason. 3. What are the opposite qualities, or chief hindrances, which generally prevent the offers of salvation from being effectually embraced? (1) Carelessness and want of attention. (2) Prejudice or prepossession. (3) Perverseness and obstinacy. (4) The greatest impediment is a love of vice. III. That they who want an ear, they who want the dispositions necessary to their receiving this gracious offer of salvation, or are prevented by any of the hindrances which render it ineffectual, are always very severely reprov'd in Scripture, plainly DENOTING IT TO BE ENTIRELY THEIR OWN FAULT THAT THEY HAVE NOT EARS TO HEAR. The reason is because these necessary dispositions are not natural but moral qualifications, and the contrary impediments are not natural but moral defects. And though, in Scripture-phrase, it is to the delusions of Satan that this moral incapacity of men is frequently ascribed, yet this is never spoken by way of excuse, but always, on the contrary, of high aggravation. IV. THAT, SINCE THE SCRIPTURE ALWAYS EXPRESSLY LAYS THE BLAME UPON MEN'S SELVES, HENCE CONSEQUENTLY ALL THOSE PASSAGES WHEREIN GOD IS AT ANY TIME REPRESENTED AS BLINDING MEN'S EYES, OR CLOSING THEIR EARS, OR HARDENING THEIR HEARTS, OR TAKING AWAY THEIR UNDERSTANDING FROM THEM, MUST OF NECESSITY BE UNDERSTOOD TO BE FIGURATIVE EXPRES-

SIONS ONLY, not denoting literally what God actually effects by His power, but what by His providence He justly and wisely permits. 1. Some of these sorts of expressions denote only the general analogy or fitness of the thing to be done. 2. Some other expressions of this kind are only figurative acknowledgments of the universal superintendency of Providence over all events, without whose permission nothing happens in the world. 3. Some other expressions of this kind are only applications of prophecies or declarations of certain prophecies being fulfilled (Jude 4; 1 Pet. ii. 8). Not appointed of God to be wicked, but foretold by the ancient prophets that such persons would arise. Of the like sense are the following (Dan. xii. 10; 2 Tim. iii. 13; Rev. xvii. 17). 4. To be denunciations or threatenings or God's justly and in a judicial manner leaving incorrigible men to themselves, after many repeated provocations (Ezek. xxiv. 13). (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1-6. Sardis.—*Sardis—The fickle Church:*—Among all the messages to the Churches there is no other which is appalling like this to the Church of Sardis. The condemnation and the denunciation are emphatic; the details, however, are obscure, and as we meditate on what is said, it strikes us that this obscurity is due to intentional reserve. This appears, first, in the title given to Christ: "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." Here we are bidden think, not of the historic Christ, but of the inhabitant of eternity. It is as if, instead of coming forth to reveal Himself, Christ were withdrawing into the recesses of Deity; He seems to be receding from our approaches, not advancing to kindle His people's adoration and reward their love. The same reserve appears in the description of the Church's sinfulness: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name," &c. That is all, but it is such an all as produces an impression of utter condemnation. The call to repentance, too, lacks something which we are accustomed to find in God's appeals to His people: "Become watchful, and stablish the things," &c. There is no hint that what has perished may be restored. More than once I have seen a tree laden with fruit, its broad green leaves betokening vigorous life, while a formless lump in the stock revealed that once the tree was so cankered that it was not expected to recover; and I have read a parable of the revival of dead graces in man's life. No such alleviating hint is dropped concerning Sardis. The time has not come for it; the need of the hour is for warning, only warning. There is a shortness in the threat: "If therefore thou shalt not watch," &c. The Lord does not condescend to say more than is needed. The Church of Sardis knows, after what has been declared, that this coming can only be for judgment, and is left to meditate on the nearness and suddenness of the doom. Even in the acknowledgment that there are faithful persons in Sardis, "a few names which did not defile their garments," and the promise made to "him that overcometh," the reserve is maintained. So deep is the sin of the Church that it is blessedness only to have been free from it. So dire is the doom that, for them who have escaped it, to have their names not blotted out of the book of life is enough. The Lord will confess their names in heaven, because it is a wonder to find souls from Sardis there. How may we apprehend the condition of Sardis? Perhaps we say, Sardis was a worldly Church; and this is undoubtedly true. "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." Addictedness to things that "perish with the using" is both the sign of a languid inner life, and certain destruction of the little life which remains. Or we may say that Sardis was an impure Church. Discipline was unknown in it; even the pretence of discipline must have been wanting, when of only a few could it be said that "they did not defile their garments." But there is one touch in the description which is full of significance. "I have not found any of thy works perfect [that is, finished] before My God." The image suggested is that of a fickle Church, rushing from one thing to another, beginning works and growing weary, taking up and dropping down, impossible to be relied on by God or man. Fickleness is a very common fault; therefore the Lord's words to Sardis need to be dwelt on. There is no graver symptom of our time than its prevailing restlessness. So many men and women follow the ever-changing fashion

—in dress, or books, or household decoration, or art, in science, in philosophy, in philanthropy, in scepticism, or in faith. Theirs is not the versatility of a catholic temper, but of a shallow soul; such persons proclaim that they have no taste, that is, no original perceptions, no standard of excellence. There is the same instability among the Churches; the popular religious catch-words are for ever changing. Yesterday the parrot-cry was "Orthodoxy"; to-day it is "Liberality, freedom of thought." There is to them no "word of the Lord"; they have no profound sense of duty, no consecrating purpose, nothing about which they can say, "This one thing I do; this is what I believe with all my heart; of this I am sure; to this I cleave, I can no other, God help me." And if fickleness be thus the sign and symptom that underneath all shews of religious activity there is death, so fickleness works death. The notion such people have that their great need is some new thing, a new impulse, a new call, is part of their soul-sickness. Their real want is the heart to stick to what they are about. Nearly the whole discipline of piety is in the fact that persistency brings lessons which we can learn in no other way. If we try to perfect what we are doing, we learn our defects and how to supply them; we learn what we can do and how to do it; we strengthen the sense of duty, and catch the meaning of hardness; sources of comfort will open to us when "sore weary with our work well done"; God Himself comes to teach us, and lead us, and be our God. In Sardis, as in Laodicea, there is a special word of comfort to the faithful, because they have found fidelity so hard. "Thou hast a few names in Sardis," &c. The promise is itself an implied charge against the many; they are defiled as well as heartless. So it must ever be; the pollutions of the world, the flesh, and the devil are sure to overtake those who are not steadfast in their piety. All the more impressive is Christ's assurance that He has not overlooked the few. He who has the seven Spirits is quick to discern fidelity in unlikely places; He watches to discern and to acknowledge them. Fidelity is acknowledged by Christ as of eternal virtue, however it may reveal itself; and the company of those who overcome is one company, whether the victory have been won on a conspicuous or an ignoble field. It seems so reserved an utterance: "I will not blot out his name"; but the book in which the name is written is "the book of life." It is no small honour which is conferred on the clean souls in Sardis when they are declared "worthy" to walk with Christ in white. There is a touch of exquisite consideration, of appreciation of what their life had been, in the promise with which the message ends: "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments." Heaven shall be to them the consummation of what they had worked for and striven after on earth. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *Christ's message to the formalist; or, feeble because incomplete*:—I. *DELUSIVE APPEARANCES; OR, THE DEATH THAT SIMULATES LIFE.* There is nothing so unmistakable as natural death; in tree, animal, or man, it makes itself fearfully plain. Life may exist in a sluggish or imperfect form, but between the feeblest life and death there is an immeasurable distance. But with spiritual death it is often otherwise. The advances are so stealthy, and so swift, that sometimes every grace and gift has perished before the symptoms of the plague are discerned. Wendell Holmes tells us that in the introduction to "Gil Blas" it is said, "Here lies buried the soul of the licentiate." Where do not souls lie buried? One beneath the self-consciousness of pride, and another beneath ceremonies which are good in themselves, but which may produce evil, if unduly relied upon. Under what sin is thy soul buried. And let us look at the gracious aspect which is presented here of our Lord. When the king of Ethiopia of old heard that the Persian monarch was dead, he remarked, "It is no wonder that he died, when he lived on dirt." The allusion, of course, is to corn, which at that period was unknown in Ethiopia. Of Darracott, on the contrary, it was finely said, "that he looked as if he lived upon live things," for he possessed such abundant vitality. So is it that a man is like that which he mentally feeds upon; so that if he communes regularly and constantly with Christ, he will become Christ-like, and will live by the life of Christ. II. *DECAYING GRACES; OR, BAD WHICH MAY BECOME WORSE.* "The decay was not as yet thorough in the Church at Sardis; there was still a chance of regaining the lost time, and living by Christ. But unless the Church became vigilant, and took the needful measures, the decay would eventually become complete." The graces of the Spirit are granted only to certain conditions, and they are removed when these essentials depart from us. Incompleteness is decay. "I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God." Their acts of charity and faith had been marred; they were introductions without any succeeding chapters, indeed, but a series of failures. And may not the words imply that one grace cannot live without the other, that they are mutually

dependent, that if one be absent, or be wilfully left out, the others will languish and perhaps die? In grace as in nature the balance of life must be preserved. So in grace, every virtue sustains some other, and they rise and fall together. III. THE SURPRISES OF JUDGMENT: THE GRACIOUS OR THE JUST ONE. "I will come as a thief," Christ threatens, by which I understand that in reference to His judgment He thus describes its stealthiness. And with the unexpected nature of this visitation, is there not also combined the idea of its being unwelcome? IV. THE TRUE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD IS A NATIVE OF HEAVEN. The true question which we should ask ourselves and each other is not, Are you prepared to die? but, Are you fit to live? Hence, Baine concentrates the meaning of the passage into the phrase, "Singular piety in degenerate times is dear to God." (*J. J. Ellis.*) *The address to Sardis*:—I. THE FORM OF ADDRESS. Sardis was a city of considerable eminence, nearly equidistant from Smyrna and Thyatira. It was formerly the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, and is celebrated in profane history as the residence of Croesus, proverbial for his great riches, which were seized by Cyrus in aid of his expedition against Babylon. In the usual course of all these cities, it fell, first into the hands of the Persians, then of the Macedonians, and then of the Roman empire. A village only now remains, near which are some ruins of the ancient city. The character in which Christ appears to this Church is taken partly from the dedication in the 4th verse, and partly from the vision in chap. i. 16. This is proof that the whole book, from the commencement, is supposed to be sent with the addresses to the Churches. II. THE REBUKE. Here is no commendation to the Church generally. It is given afterwards, as an exception to a few. This Church had formerly been in a flourishing state. It was composed, at first, of simple-hearted and pious believers. There was life in their ministry, life in their ordinances, life in their social meetings, life in their retirements, and life in their souls. This state of things, however, did not long continue. There was a gradual and imperceptible falling away from the grace of the gospel. The Spirit's influences were less desired, and consequently less enjoyed. Zeal was not deficient, nor even fortitude to brave persecution for the sake of their religion. Their works were considerable, and, in some respects, worthy of imitation by those who are actuated by better principles. These are observed by the Saviour, but as serving only to sustain a profession of the vitality of which they were destitute. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name," &c. This is displeasing to Christ, because of its gross inconsistency, because of the false aspect which it gives to His kingdom before the world, and because of the dishonour which it casts upon the office of the Spirit of God. A further complaint preferred against this Church is, "I have not found thy works perfect before God." The literal meaning is finished, or complete. Their works were imperfect in the principles from which they emanated, and in the ends to which they were directed. They were forms without life, professions without fruit. Another feature of their declension is indirectly asserted in these words, "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments." This sentence to a Church, which probably boasted most of the Christian name, and aspired most to ecclesiastical distinction, was peculiarly humiliating. Where the life of godliness fails, it were vain to look for its fruits. The name of Christianity presents a feeble barrier to the corruptions of our fallen nature. What safeguard is there in nominal Christianity against moral defilement? III. THE ADMONITIONS. The Saviour exhorts the offenders at Sardis first of all to watchfulness. "Be watchful." Let them reflect upon their condition, rouse themselves to vigilant inquiry. They are exhorted "to strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Here is an acknowledgment that some genuine piety continued amongst them. This Church is reminded, "how it had received and heard," and is exhorted to hold fast its first instructions, and repent of its deviations from them. IV. THE THREATENING: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come," &c. V. THE EXCEPTION: "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments." There were some, even in Sardis, who had escaped the general defilement. In the worse ages of the Church a remnant has been preserved that have kept their garments pure. The Waldenses, Moravians, and others, will be found to authenticate the truth of this observation. VI. THE PROMISE. The threatening is to the many that have fallen, the promise to the few that have not defiled their garments. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." VII. THE APPLICATION: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment," &c. (*G. Rogers.*) *The words of Christ to the congregation at Sardis*:—I. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE MANY. 1. They had

a reputation for being what they were not. 2. They were in a state of spiritual consumption. 3. They were in a state requiring prompt and urgent attention. 4. They were in a state of alarming danger. II. THE EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER OF THE FEW. 1. True goodness can exist under external circumstances the most corrupt. 2. True goodness, wherever it exists, engages the specific attention of Christ. (1) Because it is the highest manifestation of God upon earth. (2) Because it is the result of His mediatorial mission. (3) Because on it depends the progress of humanity. 3. True goodness will ultimately be distinguished by a glorious reward. (1) Triumph. (2) Fellowship. (3) Progress. III. THE ABSOLUTE JUDGE OF ALL. 1. In connection with the highest influence. 2. In connection with the highest ministry. 3. In connection with the highest Being. "My Father." This implies—(1) Causation. (2) Resemblance. (3) Reciprocal love. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Sardis*:—I. NOTICE THE TITLE WHICH JESUS CHRIST ASSUMES. "He that hath the seven spirits of God." 1. The Holy Ghost is a Spirit of quickening, of conversion, of prayer, of holiness, and of comfort; for all these purposes the Lord Jesus communicates the Holy Spirit, and hence, He describes Himself as having the "seven Spirits of God." 2. The expression, doubtless, signifies something transcendently above the claim of the most exalted creature. II. OBSERVE THE DEPLORABLE STATE IN WHICH THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE CHURCH IN SARDIS TO HAVE BEEN. 1. In the visible Church of Christ there are many who have nothing of religion but its lifeless and worthless form. They bear the Christian name, but are totally destitute of Christian principles, and Christian tempers. They are externally clean, and internally impure. They employ language expressive of Christian experience, without possessing correspondent feelings. 2. Genuine Christians are subject to declension in religion. III. NOTICE SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF THE AFFECTING STATE DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT. 1. Backsliding usually begins in remissness relative to the most secret exercises of religion. The first steps of a backslider are visible only to God and the individual himself. 2. The effect of spiritual declension soon makes its appearance in the domestic circle. 3. Another symptom of this affecting state is worldly-mindedness. 4. A censorious spirit is a certain symptom of lamentable declension in the things of God in the soul. 5. A love of novelty is another symptom of declension in religion. 6. It is evinced by irritability and unsubmitiveness of temper under trials and afflictions. IV. THE REASONABLE EXHORTATION WHICH OUR LORD ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS. V. THIS SUBJECT ADDRESSES ITSELF TO THREE DESCRIPTIONS OF CHARACTER. 1. To those whose souls are prosperous, and who enjoy the inestimable privileges of religion. "Be not high-minded, but fear." 2. To those whose case is described in the text. Your experience teaches you that "it is an evil thing, and bitter, to sin against God." 3. To those who are totally destitute of genuine religion. Your state is inexpressibly awful, and infinitely dangerous. (*J. Hyatt.*) *Nominal religion*:—I. THE REBUKE GIVEN IN THE TEXT TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS. Beware lest the too partial judgment of men mislead thee as to the judgment of God. Bring thyself to a Scriptural test. Judge as thou wilt be judged at the great day of account. II. THE COMMENDATION BESTOWED, IN THIS ADDRESS, ON A FEW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF SARDIS. 1. There are no circumstances so bad as to render goodness impossible. 2. Even the smallest company of true worshippers is not forgotten before God. III. THE COUNSEL GIVEN TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS IN THIS ADDRESS. There are means of revival which may in every case be employed with success. The page of history presents to us some splendid examples, in which a body of troops, checked and dispirited for a time, have suddenly beheld the banner, or caught the voice of their leader; and at once, throwing away their doubts and fears, have returned to the fight, scaled the rampart, and crowned themselves with fresh triumphs and glory. IV. THE THREAT CONNECTED WITH THESE COUNSELS TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS. All the movements of God, especially in the works of creation, are so precisely in order—the sun and the moon knowing their place, and each season following in the train of the other—that it is difficult to persuade ourselves God will in any case interrupt this regular succession of events, and astonish the sinner by any sudden or unexpected explosion of His wrath. But how often do His visitations thus unexpectedly arrest the ungodly! V. THE PROMISES WITH WHICH THE TEXT CLOSES. (*J. W. Cunningham.*) *He that hath the seven Spirits.*—*The seven Spirits of God*:—By these seven Spirits of God is meant apparently that One Divine Person, the Holy Spirit, to whom, with the Father and the Son, we render homage and praise. And the reason for the peculiarity of the sevenfold Spirit is because in this book that Spirit is contem-

plated, not so much in the unity of His person as in the manifoldness of His operations. And, further, that the number seven, being a sacred number, expresses completeness. And so, "He that hath the seven Spirits of God" represents Jesus Christ as possessing, and as possessing that He may impart, the whole fulness of that quick and Divine Spirit. Thus the first thought to be presented to the moribund Church is of the fulness of Divine life gathered into that Spirit who is not enclosed in inaccessible mysteries of deity, but going forth like the flame of the torch, like the glance of the eye, everywhere where men are. This great Life-giver is waiting for all feeble and half-dead Christian hearts to come surging into it if they will, and to fill them with its own vitality. Notice still further that the second of the predicates applied to our Lord here suggests for us one very frequent way in which He cleanses out Churches. He hath the seven Spirits and the seven stars. The stars are the symbols of the angels, and the angels are the representatives of the teachers of the Churches; taking that for granted, is it not beautiful that our Lord should be represented, if I may so say, as holding in one hand the seven Spirits of life and in the other hand the seven stars, or to put away the emblem, and to take another figure in Scripture, in the right hand He held the golden vase full of the anointing oil, in the other hand an empty chalice into which it was poured. Jesus Christ wakes up a dead Church by bringing the seven Spirits of God into the hearts of selected men: for the way in which great revivals of religion in little communities and in big ones is usually brought about is that some man or men are filled with the fulness of God and become weary of forbearing and feel the Word like a fire lit up in their bones, and are so fitted to be God's instruments for communicating the magnetism of life to the dead Church. And now let me ask you to think of one or two very simple lessons from this vision. 1. First of all, should not this vision shame us all into penitent consciousness of our own deadness? So much life waiting to be bestowed, and so little actually appropriated and possessed by us. The whole flood of Christ's grace running by our doors, and we, like improvident settlers in some new country, having no provision for storing or for distributing it, but letting it all run to waste. 2. And then, should not this vision set us upon questioning ourselves as to what it is that keeps the life of Jesus Christ out of our hearts? In the winter time in our towns, when the water stops in the houses, why doesn't it come? Because there is a plug of ice in the service pipe; and there is a plug of ice in a great many Christian hearts in connection with their Master. Life is sustained by food, by air, and by exercise. Do you feed the life of Christ in you? Do you read your Bible? You will never be vigorous Christians unless you can say, "I have desired the words of Thy mouth more than my necessary food." Life is sustained by air breathed. Do you take that Divine Spirit into yourselves, expanding that capacity by desire, and so oxygenating all your life and cleansing out the corruptions of sin? And life is sustained by exercise. Do you do anything for Jesus Christ? Absolute idleness is a sure way, and it is a very popular way amongst many Christian people to kill the life of Christ within us. 3. And so, let this vision draw us to our Master that we may get the life He can give from His own hands. Your Christianity can only be sustained by the repetition continually of that which kindled it at first. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*)

I know thy works.—*God knows the works of men:*—I. THE LORD KNOWS EVERY MAN'S ILL COURSES. He knows what men are, and what they have been, and what they will be, as He knows all their thoughts, words, and works. He knows all their dispositions, their persons, their natures, their qualities, their affections, and ends and aims and motives, and estates; He knows how many are rotten though they profess never so much, how many are unsound though they be never so well esteemed in the Church; He knows in what estate every man stands (*Job xi. 11*). The use of this is, first—Is it so that God knows all men's sinful courses? If men be dead-hearted, He knows it; if they be heartless in good duties, He knows it; though they would be loth that men should know what they are, and do keep it from them, yet they cannot daub it before God; He knows it. Then this may serve to confute them that say, God does not know sin. True, sin is an evil, yea the greatest evil of all evils; yet the knowledge of it is good. God knows who do abuse Him, and how people carry themselves towards all His commandments and worship; it is a part of His perfection to know it. Secondly, another use is to condemn the most sorts of men that do not consider of this truth; they little think that God sees all their doings. I fear there is hardly any among us that will seem to deny but that God can see all his ways; and yet we see it is too apparent by men's lives, that few men do believe

this indeed. If we did charge this upon our souls, we could not live so loosely as we do. Thirdly, Is it so that God sees all men's sins? Then this is a terror to all that go on with a self-condemning heart (1 John iii. 20). If we have a self-condemning heart, how much more shall we find a condemning God? Fourthly, this is comfort to good people; for if God see all men's sins, then He sees all men's goodness much rather. Again, what a comfort is this? If we desire to know our sins, God is able to show them unto us. Fifthly, Does God know all men's sins? Then this should make us afraid to do evil at any time, or in any place, yea in the secretest. II. THE KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD KNOWS ALL OUR WORKS IS THE POWERFUL MEANS TO ALL GOD'S ELECT, TO DO THEM GOOD, AND TO QUICKEN THEM AND TO MAKE THEM TAKE HEED OF ALL MANNER OF SIN. 1. Because the Lord's knowing of our works is not only a mere knowing of them, but also a marking and a pondering them too. 2. Because when God sees all our sins, it is with a most holy and pure eye, and such an eye as cannot abide such an object before Him. 3. Because when God sees all our sins, He records them, He notes them in a book that He may never forget them. 4. Because when God sees our sins, it is even all one as if all the world should see them too; for let our sins be never so secret, yet, if God know it, it is worse than if all the world knew it; for all the world shall know it one day. 5. Our disposition is such that we cannot abide that our wickednesses should be seen of anybody that we know cannot abide them. III. NOW WE COME TO THE PARTICULARS. The first is in these words, Thou hast a name that thou livest. By "name" is meant a mere name, as we see by the clause following, "and art dead"; for when a man is dead, the name to live must needs be a mere name. First, a name in regard of themselves, they took themselves to be alive; as Paul had a name to live before his conversion, while yet he was a Pharisee, he had then a name to live (Rom. vii. 9). Secondly, a name in regard to other godly Churches; others in the judgment of charity conceived they were alive; as the Scribes, and the Pharisees, our Saviour Christ told them, they had a name to live (Matt. xxiii. 27), that is, ye seem to be alive, ye have a name to live, but indeed ye are dead. Thirdly, a name among poor, ignorant, and simple people that are led away with shows. Ye know that there be abundance of poor, simple people, that know not what true religion is, nay, maybe hate it, but yet they are led away with the show of it. Fourthly, a name among the persecutors of religion, and so they are persecuted too among them that live indeed; for mockers take them to be of the same number. Now the point of doctrine is this, that it is a horrible thing to rest in a mere name of being religious. The reasons are, first—this is to be farthest off from religion; because himself will not, and others cannot so effectually apply to him the means of recovery, he being in his own and others' judgment a true convert. As a sick man who thinks himself well is of all others farthest from cure. Religion is a real thing, and therefore he that rests in having the name of it, is farthest off from it. Secondly, it is a very blasphemy to get the name for good people, when we are not good people indeed. The reason is this—religion hath an inward dependence upon God; it hath an internal relation unto God; it puts a man into a propriety with God that God is his God; it puts the very name of God upon a man. Now, if a man take the name without the thing, it must needs be a very blasphemy. Thirdly, it is a flat lie, when a man hath the name of a good Christian, and hath not the thing signified by the name. Fourthly, it is an unreasonable thing. When a man hath not the thing, there is no reason that he should have the name. Fifthly, it is an impudent thing. When we have a name to live and to be wrought upon by the Word, what an impudent thing is it, if we do not look to it that we be so indeed. One would think we should blush to think what a name we have, and how little we make good our name between God and our own souls. Sixthly, it is an inexcusable thing. If we have a name to be alive, we are without excuse if we be not. First, because out of our own mouths God will judge us; we said we were His people, we took the name of His servants; why then He will say, Why had I not your service? Why would you do no more for Me? Secondly, ye can have no other excuse. Can you say you could not believe in My Name? Ye could not forego such and such lusts at My command? Why then would you go for My servants? Seventhly, it is an unprofitable thing: a naked name will do us no good. True faith alone does justify, not the name of it; true peace of conscience does comfort, not the name of it; true interest in God gives a man a cheerful access to God, not the name of it. Eighthly, it is not only unprofitable, but also it is hurtful. It is hurtful unto others. It is hurtful unto them that are without; for

when they see how lazy such as go for professors be, how they have little else in them but talking and professing, and prating and hearing, this hardens the heart of them that are without, and makes them all think that religion is a matter of nothing. Again, they do a great deal of hurt unto comers on. Many a man that is smitten at the word, that begins amendment, and gives good hopes that he will come to something in the end, when he lights upon such Sardinian saints, that are so in name, but there is no life at all in them, these put him back again. Again, they do a great deal of hurt unto the saints of God, sometimes by deceiving of their hearts and cooling of their zeal and fervour, or if they cannot do that, then they hate them, and prove very shy of them, and gird them behind their backs, and do them much mischief. Again, they do a great deal of hurt to themselves, for it had been better for them they had never had a name, than having a name not to be as the name does require. No; the Lord does not find fault with Sardis for having of a name that they lived, but that they had this name when as they were dead; if they had been alive, the name to be alive had been well. Then what use must we make of this point? 1. To show the misery of some of our Churches. They have only a name to live, though we might live well enough, for we have the doctrine of life, in many places, yet in regard of our conversations for the most part, we may say it is but only a name. For how does sin reign among us everywhere? Covetousness, profaneness, fulness of bread, lust, security, deadness of heart, formality—now where such sins do abound, there the power of godliness must needs be away. Generally our assemblies content themselves with an outward profession; if they go so far, they have but a name to live. Come we to the graces of God's Holy Spirit, without the which a man is dead in trespasses and sins, &c., as faith, repentance, peace of conscience, and love, &c., where are any of these to be found? 2. Another use is of terror against us. Do we think that the Lord will endure this at our hands? He hath endured it too long, but He will not suffer it always. He hath a spiritual thunder-clap that He lets fly against this sin (Isa. xxxii. 5). That is, the Lord will unmask all such persons, He will pluck off all their names, and they shall have a name fit for their natures, and He will do this—First, in their own consciences. Secondly, in the judgment of others. If we rest in a name, the Lord will detect us at last before others; and then what a shame will this be? (*W. Fenner, B.D.*)

The state of all men known to Christ:—I. CHRIST HATH A PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF EVERY ONE'S WORKS. 1. In what extent we are to understand "the works" which Christ is said to know. Works here are not to be taken as distinguished from words and thoughts, but in the largest sense, as including both. 2. In what manner Christ knows men's works. (1) The knowledge Christ has of the works of men is most clear. He does not take up with appearances, but sees through every disguise, and takes things as they really are. (2) The knowledge Christ hath of the works of men is immediate, not by report from others, but from His own all-penetrating light and inspection. (3) The knowledge Christ hath of the works of men is perfect and full. Perfect as to their number; none of them escape His notice or regard; perfect as to their nature and circumstances, and as to the springs and aims of those that do them. Works that we may have forgotten are known to Him and remembered by Him. (4) The knowledge Christ has of the works of men is infallible and liable to no mistake. He cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked. (5) The knowledge Christ has of the works of men is with approbation, or dislike, according as they are found to be good or bad.

II. WHOEVER HE BE THAT HATH A NAME TO LIVE, AND YET IS DEAD, IS KNOWN TO CHRIST AS WHAT HE REALLY IS. 1. What is implied in having a name to live? They that are really in a state of grace may be justly said to live, as such souls live to the best purpose; for to them to live is Christ. They are out of the reach of the sting of death, and so need not through fear of it pass their lives in bondage; they are near a blessed immortality, in which they are to live for ever. To be thus privileged is to be alive indeed. And such a name may be acquired—(1) By a freedom from the grosser pollutions of the world. (2) A name to live, as it implies an open and visible profession of subjection to Christ, a joining with His people in His worship and ordinances, and an holding on some time in such a course; so it may arise from these. (3) A name to live may result from experiencing the common operations of the Spirit of God, which for a time may look hopeful and promising. (4) These convictions and external reformation may be accompanied with excellent gifts, enlargedness in the duty of prayer, joy and delight in hearing and attending upon the supper of the Lord, frequency in acts of self-denial and mortification. There may be great head-

knowledge and ability to discourse of hypocrisy itself with appearing abhorrence, and of sincerity with signs of love to it; and yet all these may be found in one unchanged at heart. 2. Such a name some professors of Christianity may have, who are all the while they bear it spiritually dead. If it be asked, With whom such may have a name to live? a negative answer is obvious: Not with Him who seeth not as man seeth. But, 1. They may have a name to live with themselves: they may reckon themselves in a state of grace, when they are all the while in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. (1) In the security that reigns in their souls. They dread no danger, though the nearest to it, but cry, Peace, Peace, to themselves, when sudden destruction is coming upon them. (2) Sinners show their good opinion of themselves in the hope they keep up of their safety with reference to their souls and eternity. (3) They may have a superficial joy in spiritual things as the stony ground hearers had in receiving the word; and thus, with themselves they have a name to live. 2. They may have a name to live among others, and these the friends and followers of Christ. 3. The sadness of the case, to be dead, under a name to live, or of being alive. Application: 1. Does Christ know every man's works? How strange is it that it should be brought into dispute, whether He be truly and properly God! 2. Does Christ know the works of every man? What ignorance or unbelief does it argue in such as sin securely, if they can but do it secretly! 3. What seriousness becomes us whenever we engage in any holy duty or religious worship, as all our works are known to Christ! 4. What reason have we to be humble in a review of our own works, as they are all known to Christ, and, as many of them are such as we have cause to fear, He at once observed and disapproved! 5. How fit is Christ to be the Judge of all men at the last day, who knows every man's work now! 6. How big with terror to hypocrites is this doctrine. 7. The hearts of those in whom there is no guile allowed, may take comfort in the thoughts that Christ knows their works and knows them to be the fruits of His Spirit and grace in them. 8. May one that has a name to live be spiritually dead? Hence learn that saving religion in an inward thing. 9. When Christ declares, I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead, with what solicitude should every one make the inquiry, Lord, is it I? 10. How inconsiderable a thing is it to be judged of man in this day! of man that looketh only on the outside. Our chief concern is with one infinitely greater: He that judges us is the Lord. 11. How terrible will the day of Christ's coming be to the self-deceiving hypocrite, and how joyful to the humble saint. (*D. Wilcox*)

Works:—I. THE WORK OF THE BODY. II. THE WORK OF THE MIND. III. THE WORK OF THE CHARACTER. IV. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT. V. THE WORK OF SUFFERING. (*H. H. Gowen*.)

That thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.—On *formality and hypocrisy in religion*:—I. WHAT IS NECESSARY TO GIVE A MAN A NAME TO LIVE? 1. It is necessary that he abstain from vice, and the grosser pollutions of the world. 2. Besides this, there must be an external appearance of devotion. Mere negatives will not be sufficient. II. WHEN MAY A MAN BE SAID TO HAVE A NAME TO LIVE ONLY? A statue may be so curiously painted and dressed as to be mistaken, at a distance, for a man; and a hypocrite may borrow so much of the appearance of Christian graces, as may enable him to pass for a genuine Christian. 1. He has nothing but a name who attends to the outward part of religion only. 2. He that has but a name to live, feels no satisfaction and joy in approaching to God. 3. He has a name to live only, who, notwithstanding all his religious exercises, is in no degree better. 4. He has a name to live only, whom difficulties or apprehended dangers cause to turn back, or who, as Solomon says, "faints in the day of adversity." III. THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF BEING SATISFIED WITH A NAME TO LIVE WHILE YOU ARE DEAD. 1. Consider then, that while this is your character your services cannot be acceptable to God. 2. Consider again, that while you indulge this lifeless religion you will never attain to holiness. 3. Besides, it can never give true satisfaction. It may silence, but it cannot satisfy conscience. 4. With nothing but a name to live, we shall never obtain an admission into heaven. (*S. Lavington*.)

Some causes of spiritual death:—1. One cause of spiritual death is self-satisfaction. A traveller lost on the prairie, with the snow falling fast and thick, with his blood coursing slowly, feels that sense of ease which the opium-eater knows. He lies down in the soft white drifts. They make an easy bed. His friends find him and try to arouse him. He would rather be left undisturbed. His self-satisfaction works his death. George III. was satisfied with his government of the American colonies; he therefore refused to remedy

its abuses, and his satisfaction cost him these colonies. Upon all who are satisfied with their standing before God the chill of spiritual death has begun to rest. They can no more draw spiritual life from themselves, than one can feed his body by sucking blood from its veins. Therefore, satisfied with their relation to God, they do not strive to gain life from Him who is the source of the life spiritual, as He is of the life physical. Their self-satisfaction works the ruin of their souls. 2. But more frequently than by self-satisfaction is the spiritual life killed by the indulgence of some sin. Many a man has felt he could surrender his entire property to God; but when the temptation arose of making a hundred dollars by a trick of the trade, he has chosen to be dishonest. But the sin may not be one of commission. It may consist in the omission of some duty. It may consist in the refusal of some means of grace. It may consist in the preference of doing nothing to advance God's cause. Such sins of omission deaden the spiritual life. But in general the sin consists in the choice of some other good than the good which the Christian life affords. (*C. P. Thwing.*) *The warning voice re-echoed from Sardis:*—The evidences of salvation are various, and may be viewed in various ways. On the present occasion—looking to the expression of the text, where the word rendered “dead” is literally “a dead body,” a corpse—I will endeavour to work out the marks of a living as opposed to a dead soul, from what we know to be marks of a living as opposed to a dead body. I. One great characteristic of spiritual life, in the Bible, is the possession of SPIRITUAL SIGHT. The first test, therefore, I would propose of spiritual life is a perception of spiritual truth. Place before the eye of the living body a scene of loveliness or of horror, and from the eye the heart is at once affected, at once feels the attraction or repulsion, and so feels as to act upon that feeling. Even so, place before the vision of the living soul a spiritual truth—the beauty of holiness, or the loathsomeness of sin—and at once does the heart so feel the truth as to act upon that feeling. Nay, verily, as spiritual facts are vastly beyond all corporeal facts in importance, so spiritual facts have vastly more effect upon the heart, when once the soul's vision is tolerably clear: they speedily become its all in all. II. The living soul has HEARING as well as sight. There are many, who are listeners to religious sounds after a fashion, eager attendants on this or that preacher, ready hearers to certain kinds of religious conversation. But their hearing is an empty thing. It fills their head with notions and their tongue with words, and perchance their heart with a sort of excitement; but as to any solid effect on heart and practice, that is wanting. How different with the soul that really lives! This soul, conscious of God's presence, trembles at His threatenings, bows in reverence to His commands, melts at the hearing of His love, and pants after His promises in the very fervency of desire. Its spiritual ear, as its spiritual eye, brings every impression home to the heart; there roots it a vital principle, sanctifying the inner man and prompting the outer practice. III. The living soul possesses also the faculty of SPEECH. Its very existence is prayer. Keenly alive to the greatness of its wants, and as alive to the willing fulness of the Lord, its desires are continually travelling upwards from these wants to that fulness, in the inward breathings of prayer, if not with its audible words. IV. I will continue the analogy but one step further, and that is in GROWTH. True, spiritual life, as it is a quickening, so is it an impulsive principle. As it gives action to the spiritual eye, ear, and tongue, so does it give growth to the whole inner man. Slow growth it may be; still grow the living soul must and will. It is a growth in knowledge; but that is not the sure test. It is a growth in holiness, and that is *the* test; the one clear, decisive test of the soul's life (*Matt. vii. 20*). True Christian holiness is not the honesty of the worldling; nor the honour of the gentleman; nor the temperance of the philosopher; nor the kindness of the good-natured; nor yet is it the mechanical observance of the formalist, nor the bustling vehemence of the religionist. True Christian holiness is a hearty conformity to God's whole will, acting in a loving obedience to all God's commandments. It works in two great lines of feeling and operation—in a deep-rooted horror of sin, as God's utter hate, and a perfect hungering and thirsting after righteousness, as God's supreme delight, both springing from entire love to God as their one grand source and motive. Conclusion: What is the result of this inquiry for you? As mark after mark of spiritual life has been brought forward, have you been able to say, “This mark I have; if not in the highest degree, still, God be thanked, most assuredly I have it”? But are there any who can find no such marks in their soul? Then, whatever else you may have, you are destitute indeed. You may be very amiable in men's eyes. Death has sometimes its momentary beauty. A shadowy loveliness is seen

to linger on the lifeless features. Yet the work of decay and destruction is just as busy beneath. You may be gifted with great talents and great energy; you may gain high distinction and honour in the world; but if your soul be not "alive in Christ," what is all this but a fading garland on the head of a corpse? (*John Gibson, B.D.*)

A living Church:—I. A CHURCH MAY BE SAID TO LIVE WHILE SHE IS DEAD, WHEN SHE HAS THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN WITHOUT THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL. 1. The most important discovery in the Word of God is that of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ from sin and death and misery. One of the most vital doctrines must therefore be what relates to the Person of the Redeemer. 2. The second doctrine upon which depends the life of the Church, is the Atonement or Sacrifice which Christ our Lord has offered for sin. The supreme deity of our Saviour demonstrates His power to save if He would. 3. The third doctrine upon which depends the life of the Church, is that which relates to the Holy Spirit and His influences. 4. In the sum of these doctrines we discover the fourth principle upon the influence of which the life of the Church depends, the doctrine of Free Grace. The practical reception of this doctrine in the Church lies at the foundation of a religion for sinners. II. The Church may have a name to live, and be in reality dead, WHEN ORTHODOXY IN OPINION IS SUBSTITUTED FOR MORALITY IN PRACTICE. III. THE CHURCH MAY HAVE A NAME TO LIVE, WHILE IN REALITY DEAD, FROM HAVING AN EXTERNAL MORALITY WITHOUT HUMILITY AND PIETY. (*H. Cooke, D.D.*)

That a minister may be in fault that the people are dead:—I say the minister may be in the fault; the point is very clear from this place. The Lord being to reprove the people here of Sardis, for their deadness in religion, He directs His reproof to their minister. The good or bad estate of a people dependeth much upon the minister. Commonly we see it fall out, as the Prophet Hosea said, "Like people, like priest" (*Hos. iv. 9*). Such as the builder is, such is the building; as is the husbandman, so is the husbandry. (*Wm. Fenner, B.D.*)

Moral death:—By dead I mean five things. 1. Deadness of guilt; when a man is guilty of any offence, that is death by the law. Now when a man is not pardoned of God, he is dead, though he have never so many hopes and conceits of forgiveness. 2. Deadness of mind, when the mind is ignorant of God in regard of saving knowledge. 3. Deadness of heart, when the heart is not inclined towards God, then we say it is dead towards God and all goodness. 4. Deadness of conscience, when the conscience hath no force; it may be it finds fault with such and such ways, but it hath no power over the man to make him to leave them. 5. Deadness of affection; when the affections are clumsy, and will not stir towards God and all heavenly things. Should a man have all Christianity in him, and yet be dead and dull and without life, it is even all one as if he had just nothing. First, for conversion. Should a man seem to be converted, O what a changed man is this! He was a drunkard, and now he is sober. This is well. Ay, but if thou beest dead to the ways of God this is nothing towards heaven; except a new life be put into this man, to be alive in all these good ways; except he be quickened together with Christ. Secondly, faith. Should a man lean himself upon God, and upon Christ, should a man apply all the promises of the gospel to his soul; alas, what of this? If this man be dead still, without such a faith as produces life, it is little better than nothing. Thirdly, to be a member of the visible Church of God, to be a stone in God's building, put in by baptism, kept in by profession of the Christian faith. This is a poor thing, if this man now be not a lively stone. Fourthly, for hope. It may be thou hast hope that thou art a good Christian, thou hast a hope of the heavenly inheritance; now if thy hope be a dead hope, if it does not quicken thee up to trample on the world, to carry thee on through thick and thin, this is not a gracious hope. Fifthly, for repentance. Whatever thou hast to say for repentance, canst thou plead a thousand changes and reformatations, yet if thou hast not gotten out of a dead temper, thou art yet under an impenitent heart. Again, to go over all duties of religion—they must be done with life; to do them with a dead heart, is as good as not to do them at all. Religion is a very irksome thing unto us, as long as we are dead-hearted. What is it that takes away the grievousness of it, but a lively heart? (*ibid.*)

Death in the Church:—I need scarcely remind you that all the seven epistles to the Churches are cast in one mould; each of them begins with setting forth some aspect of the ascended Christ's power or glory or relation with His Churches, which aspect is generally drawn from the great vision in the first chapter. It is to this correspondence between the aspect in which our Lord is revealed here and the state of the Church of which the vision is given, that I venture to ask your atten-

tion. First of all, then, let us try to understand what sort of a Church it is that wants this vision. It was dead. One smiting word stands in the place of all characterisation; it had no persecutions like the faithful band at Smyrna. Why should it? It had not life enough to be obnoxious! What was there in such a Church as that to provide any antagonism? It exactly suited the world's purpose, and was, in fact, only a bit of the world under another name. A dead Church is on the best possible terms with a dead world. When the frost binds the ground, weeds and flowers alike cease to be put forth. There is a worse condition than when many people are thinking earnestly about religion, and some of them are thinking wrongly. And so the Church at Sardis had no heretics because there was nobody in it that cared enough about the principles of Christianity to think earnestly about them. And it had no immoralities either—most respectable. And yet one Eye looked at it and said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." About how many of our Churches and of the individual Christians who take up the profession of Christ and connect themselves with ecclesiastical arrangements with such light hearts, may the same be said! Life is the condition of union with Jesus Christ, and death is the grim alternative that waits upon separation from Him. That Church had lost the tenacity of its hold and the intimacy of its union with Jesus Christ. Now note further, as brought out in this letter, that such a condition is not final and irreversible. They were not so utterly dead as moribund, and so in another part of the letter we read about things which remain and are ready to die, and about works which were done but were not perfect or fulfilled. Ay! effects last after causes cease; institutions live when all the reality is out of them. Habit, use and wont, forms, ceremonies, keep up the appearance of vitality when the reality is almost gone. There are creatures of a low organisation where you can get muscular contractions after life is extinct; you will find gardens round many a deserted, roofless house in the country where the weeds have not killed all the roses, and a vagrant flower or two still remains to testify the culture that was. And so in thousands of our communities there is enough left of the living, lingering effect of the primitive impulse to keep up a ghastly mockery of life which would befar better if it knew itself to be what it is—dead! And that brings me to say again that such a condition may be absolutely concealed from every eye but the Eye that is as a flame of fire. A great many of our communities I am afraid are living on the past. John Wesley had a great name, but you cannot live because there was once John Wesley with you. Unconsciousness is the surest sign of spiritual decline. I suppose a man paralysed has no sense in his limbs, and might put his feet into a tub of scalding water and take the flesh off the bones and never know it. Frost-bitten limbs are perfectly comfortable: it is the waking that is the pain. Like the hero of the Old Testament Book with his locks cropped, they go out as of old to exercise themselves, and they wist not that their strength has departed from them till they try a death-grapple with the Philistines, and then they find it out fast enough. What is it that has in the course of ages worn into indistinctness the sharp-cut granite features of the Sphinx that looks out over the Egyptian desert? The perpetual attrition of microscopic grains of sand blown against it by the vagrant winds! And so the multitudinous trivialities of life, coming in contact with the image of Jesus Christ in our hearts, will efface its fair features and leave but a dim outline. II. Now, let me ask you to LOOK AT THE VISION WHICH SUCH A CHURCH NEEDS. "He that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." It is a distinct reference to the personal spirit of God conceived of in the manifoldness of His operations rather than in the unity of His Personality. That spirit comes permeating, enlightening, illuminating, vivifying, discerning, and strengthening all of us if we yield ourselves to it. There is the antidote for a dead Church, a living spirit in the sevenfold perfectness of His operations. He is the spirit of consolation, of adoption, of supplication, of holiness and wisdom, of power and of love, and of a sound mind, and into all our deadness there will come the life-breath which shall surely quicken it all. That which is unique in the history of Christianity as compared with all other religions, its power of self-recuperation, and when it is apparently nearest extinction, the marvellous way in which it flames up again because the Spirit of the Lord is poured forth. Other teachers—what can they do? They can impart a system, they can train a little group of dwindled imitators, who generally imitate their weaknesses, and think they are imitating their strength, but to give the spirit that animated the originator is exactly what none of them can do. III. THE WORDS OF MY TEXT SUGGEST ONE OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THIS BESTOWMENT OF THE SEVEN SPIRITS IS ACCOMPLISHED. One way by which that Spirit of

God is shed abroad upon His moribund Church is by raising up men in it filled with the Spirit, and whose intense vitality communicates life to that which is almost dead. Let us all go back to Him for quickening. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Uselessness of mere profession:—Many content themselves with the name of Christians; as if many a ship hath not been called "Safeguard" or "Good-speed" which yet hath fallen into the hands of pirates. (*J. Trapp.*)

A dead Church:—A pastor of a Church in a western town went to his prayer-meeting on Thursday evening as usual, where the attendance was very small; but that evening no one came; even the sexton went away after lighting the church. After waiting half an hour for his members to put in their appearance, and finding that he was the sole worshipper, he went to the bell-cord and slowly tolled the bell, as the custom was when any one died in the town. The alarm was magnetic. All over the town the inquiry was made, "Who is dead?" A number of the members of the Church hastened there to ascertain who was the unfortunate one. Just then the minister, descending the steps, was interrogated by several of his flock, "Who is dead?" "This Church is dead," was his response, and then and there he resigned the pastorate. (*D. Tasker, D.D.*)

Semblances of life:—Nature presents us with many affecting illustrations of the semblance of life, where death is reigning; the *flowers* in your garden may for a time retain the form, when life is extinct; the ancient oak in the forest may stand for years erect, while life has long since passed away; the tiny shell on yonder beach may attract your notice, when its once little tenant can nowhere be found: so do we often think we find the form of godliness, when the power—the reality—the life are wanting. (*C. Bowes.*)

A name to live:—I have seen a graft bound to the bleeding tree. It was inserted into its wounded side, that both might become one. Yet no incorporation followed. There was no living union. Spring came singing, and with her fingers opened all the buds; summer came, with her dewy nights and sunny days, and brought out all the flowers; brown autumn came to shake the trees and reap the fields, and with music and dances and mirth to hold harvest-home; but that unhappy branch bore no fruit, nor flower, nor even leaf. Held on by dead clay and rotting cords, it merely stuck to the living tree, a withered and unsightly thing. And so, alas! it is with many; having a name to live, they are dead. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

A show of life:—God abhors and man despises the fair colours of a religious profession that stand out, as it were, above the surface of the nature, like the *appliquée* of the embroiderer, instead of being interwoven with the stuff so as to become a part of it. Mere outward decorum and religious decency are not what God requires, though they are too often, alas! what is presented to Him in lieu of the beauties of holiness. It is easy to assume the character of God's people, to imitate their manners, to use their language, to conform to their habits. It is easier to paint a flower than to grow one. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

The semblance of life:—How like to a Christian a man may be and yet possess no vital godliness! Walk through the British Museum, and you will see all the orders of animals standing in their various places, and exhibiting themselves with the utmost possible propriety. The rhinoceros demurely retains the position in which he was set at first, the eagle soars not through the window, the wolf howls not at night; every creature, whether bird, beast, or fish, remains in the particular glass case allotted to it; but we all know these are not the creatures, but only the outward semblances of them. So in the Churches of Christ, many professors are not living believers, but stuffed Christians. They possess all the externals of religion, and every outward morality that you could desire; they behave with great propriety, they keep their places, and there is no outward difference between them and the true believer, except upon the vital point, the life which no power on earth can possibly confer. There is this essential distinction, spiritual life is absent. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

A life akin to death:—I was reading in Humboldt's "Cosmos," the other day, a very remarkable thing. He tells us that he went with some Indians into a number of huge caverns in South America, which were locked in perpetual darkness; but in them certain fruit-eating bats were accustomed to go to dwell. They had brought there the seeds of different plants, and when Humboldt and his guides entered with their torches, there were trees and plants of every kind that had grown in the utter darkness. Just as you have seen a potato grow in your cellar, and send out its yellow sickly shoots, so the whole cavern was like a great forest or garden, full of these ghastly ghosts of plants. Oh, you may work in your Churches, and you may sow, and you may labour, but if the blessed light of God's own truth does not come in, it will be a sickly vegetation akin to death. (*Ibid.*) *Formalism*

and true Christianity :—The other day I was at a railway station with a friend, and looking at a couple of engines. As we were talking the engine-driver came up, and I remarked, "We have just been admiring the engines; very splendid ones they are. I should think they are just alike." The man looked at me significantly. "Yes; they are much alike outside, but that one there has no fire burning, and it cannot even move itself; but this one here has the fire burning and the steam up, and I am just going to jump upon it, and you will see it run away with the whole train behind it." Well, I thought, there is just that difference between the formalist and the true Christian. The formalist is, to all appearance, a splendid engine; but there is no fire and the steam is not up. The Christian may not be so powerful-looking or so showy, but then the fire is burning, and the steam is up; and while the one cannot help himself, the other will by his zeal affect a whole neighbourhood. (C. Garrett.)

Vers. 2, 3. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.—*The evidences and causes of the decay of religion in the soul* :—

I. WHEN ONE'S RELIGION IS DECAYED TO DYING REMAINS. 1. Some things from whence one's religion may seem to be brought to dying remains, while really it is not so.

(1) The wearing away of violent affections and commotions of heart in religion, or the settling of flashes of affection. (2) One's not being able to go through with duties with that ease that sometimes they have done before. (3) The marks of the decay of natural vigour left on religious duties. (4) More felt stirring of corruption than before. 2. Some things that will evince one's religion to be brought to dying remains, whether they think it or not. (1) When the conscience boggles not but at gross outbreaks. (2) When one's conscience is strait in the circumstantial of religion, but lax in the substantial of it. (3) When there is any one thing lacking to the perfection of one's religion in parts. (4) When folks' strength against sin and temptation is abated: that is a plain indication of a decay, for "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18). (5) When the work of mortification is at a stand; the man's not watching his heart, and noticing the lusts rising there, and setting himself to mortifying them (Rom. viii. 13). (6) When, though the duties of religion be kept up, yet spirituality in duties is gone. (7) When one is become a stranger to the life of faith in Christ Jesus, what is left but dying remains.

II. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES THAT BRING ONE'S RELIGION TO DYING REMAINS. 1. Unwatchfulness (Rev. iii. 2). Carelessness about one's body is oft-times fatal to it; about one's substance, breeds a consumption in their estate; and unwatchfulness over the heart breeds a spiritual decay. 2. Spiritual sloth (Eccles. x. 18). This is a bewitching sin, and if once Satan get men asleep on this enchanted ground, be sure they shall be robbed there. 3. Quenching of the Spirit (1 Thess. v. 19). 4. Slacking in diligence about the duties of religion (Prov. xix. 15). 5. Doing anything with a doubting conscience, doubting whether the practice be lawful or not. 6. Worldliness and carnality. When one goes aside from God to the world, he lies down among the lions' dens, and how can he come away without loss? 7. The entertaining of any one lust, or idol of jealousy (Psa. lvi. 18).

III. WHEREIN LIES THE STRENGTHENING OF THINGS WHICH REMAIN, THAT ARE READY TO DIE? 1. In blowing up the remaining spark that is ready to die out (2 Tim. i. 6). 2. In adding to the remains (2 Peter i. 5-7). (T. Boston, D.D.)

The decline of religion—its causes and remedies :—**I. CAUSES.** 1. A culpable inattention to the things which are necessary to preserve the spirit and life of religion. (1) Inattention to the characteristic spirit of the gospel is highly injurious to the life of religion. (2) Inattention to the means which God has appointed to preserve the life of personal religion, is a cause of its declension. (3) The next thing necessary to maintain personal religion, is serious attention to the motives which the gospel inspires, the neglect of which forms a powerful cause of its decline. (4) It is necessary also, in order to maintain the life of religion in the soul of individuals, that they should keep the principal design of the gospel in view; the neglect of this is one cause of its declension. 2. The pernicious influence of erroneous sentiments. (1) One of the pernicious effects of erroneous sentiments is, that they induce those who are under their influence to be more attentive to speculative opinions than to personal religion. (2) Their tendency is to make the Church less solicitous about the conversion of sinners to God, than the establishment of some favourite notions. (3) Erroneous sentiments produce evil passions, and prevent

unity of exertion, and thus tend towards the decline of the Church. Peace and unity are of high importance to the prosperity of a religious community; whatever tends to engender evil tempers is therefore very injurious, and hastens its decline. (4) The introduction and prevalence of pernicious sentiments tend to fix an unfavourable character on the Church, and thus to prevent its prosperity, and hasten its decline. (5) The Spirit of God is grieved, and withholds His gracious presence from the people. 3. The destructive influence of a worldly spirit. (1) A worldly spirit is manifested when individuals or families struggle for pre-eminence. (2) When property is suffered to have an undue influence in the affairs of the Church. (3) When the members of the Church are attempted to be directed or governed more by the power and authority of its officers than by reason and Scripture—by love and persuasion. (4) When there is a want of suitable submission and subordination in the members of the Church. (5) The spirit of the world is manifested in a way very injurious to the Church, when its most prominent members so comply with the maxims and customs of the world as to have their Christian characters involved in that of the worldling and people of fashion. 4. The neglect of those Scriptural principles which were given by Christ for the direction and government of His Church. (1) The neglect of the nature and importance of the Scriptural principles given for the guidance of the Church, often involves in it consequences injurious to the peace and prosperity of the body. (2) One of the most important cases which imperatively requires an attention to right principles, is the choice of a minister. The decline of some Churches may be traced to imprudent steps taken on such an occasion. (3) Another thing which leads to the decline of religion and the Church, is the neglect of Scriptural principles in the admission of members. (4) The neglect of Scriptural principles in the conduct of the Church toward its minister sometimes operates as a cause of the decline of religion in that congregation. (5) The neglect of Scriptural principles by the Church with regard to their conduct towards each other, is often a cause of its decline. 5. The next general cause is the prevalence of a fastidious and a false taste in matters of religion. A false taste may effect (1) the simplicity, (2) the unity, and (3) the energy of the gospel. 6. The last, and often the principal cause of the decline of religion in a Church, is an inefficient ministry. II. REMEDIES. 1. That all the individuals in the congregation should use every means in their power to impress upon their own minds, and upon the minds of others, a sense of the necessity and importance of revival. 2. Endeavour to discover and remove the obstacles to its success. 3. Adapt the means of revival to the circumstances of the place. 4. Unite and combine the diversified talents of the people for the accomplishment of this end. (*John Griffin.*) *The true method of securing a revival:*—In an age when so much is said and thought about revivals, the passage before us is peculiarly appropriate. The great secret, after all, consists in rightly cherishing those things that are already possessed. I. WHAT ARE THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN IN SUCH A CHURCH? 1. Some degree of Church organisation. There was, in the case of Sardis, a “name to live”; they had “received” the oracles of God. It was a Church, although a weak one. 2. Some of the Church ordinances. They had the Word of God. The preaching of the gospel, if not accompanied by the saving power of former days, was still a privilege in their possession. 3. Some of the undertakings to which a Christian Church may address itself. “I know thy works.” 4. The presence of a few godly men. II. WHAT IS THE DIVINE METHOD OF SECURING A REVIVAL? 1. Human ingenuity would probably resort to one or other of these two methods: (1) Some would suggest entire reconstruction. They would remove the weak and sickly plants, and till the ground afresh. (2) Others would seek to accomplish the end desired by introducing some powerful revival element, such as they have heard of as successful elsewhere—revival preaching, revival services, revival hymns. 2. God’s plan differs from both these. He neither destroys nor calls in the aid of foreign excitement. He simply says, “Strengthen the things that remain.” Literally, “Make fast the surviving things that are about to perish.” Here then we have—(1) Church organisation consolidated. (2) Church ordinances more diligently observed. (3) Church work more actively performed. (4) Godly men multiplied. (*F. Wagstaff.*) *The weak things of the soul, and the way in which they should be strengthened:*—I. THE WEAK THINGS OF THE SOUL THAT NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED. 1. The graces of the soul. 2. The activities of the soul. Work is the best medicine for a weak soul. 3. The best talents of the soul. Grace, energy, thought, generosity, love, and enterprise—these gifts need culture, or they will perish. II. THE METHOD BY WHICH

THE WEAK THINGS OF THE SOUL SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED. 1. They are to be strengthened by quiet meditation. 2. They are to be strengthened by earnest prayer. 3. They are to be strengthened by the influences of the Holy Spirit.

III. THE REASON WHY THE WEAK THINGS OF THE SOUL SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY STRENGTHENED. The weak things of the soul, being ready to die, are in imminent danger, and require immediate attention. This death should be avoided, because it is the extinction, not of the body, but of the invaluable energies of the soul; of its faith and love. Men cannot afford to let these things die; they have nothing to substitute in their place. Lessons: 1. That the soul of man has vitalities which require to be nourished by appropriate food and care. 2. That if this attention is withheld they will perish. 3. That heaven is anxious for the quickening of the energies of the soul. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Methods to be taken for the revival of religion*.—I. WE SHOULD HAVE A CONSTANT REGARD TO THE FRAME AND TEMPER OF OUR OWN SPIRITS. II. WE SHOULD TAKE HEED ALSO TO OUR DOCTRINE, THAT OUR PREACHING MAY HAVE THE MOST DIRECT TENDENCY TO DO GOOD. III. PUBLIC CATECHISING OF YOUNG PERSONS IS A PROPER METHOD TO REVIVE AND SUPPORT THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION. IV. WE SHOULD FREQUENTLY VISIT OUR PEOPLE, AND MANAGE OUR VISITS IN SUCH A MANNER AS WILL MOST EFFECTUALLY PROMOTE THEIR SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT. V. I FURTHER PROPOSE THAT WE TAKE A PARTICULAR NOTICE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNDER RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS. VI. ADMONITION AND REPROOF MUST NOT BE NEGLECTED, IF WE DESIRE RELIGION SHOULD FLOURISH UNDER OUR CARE. VII. WE SHOULD BE MUCH IN PRAYER FOR THE BLESSING OF GOD UPON OUR ENDEAVOURS. VIII. WE MUST TAKE THE GREATEST CARE TO SUPPORT THESE ATTEMPTS BY A REGULAR AND EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOUR.

1. Consider what it is that is dying; it is vital and practical religion, the glory of our Churches. 2. The revival of religion among us may prevent the growth of infidelity and bigotry. 3. A regard to our reputation should engage us to attempt the revival of religion. 4. Our support in life depends upon the regard which our people have to true religion. 5. A consciousness of our having done our utmost for the revival of religion will be a noble support in our dying moments. 6. Our degree of glory in the future state will be proportionable to our present zeal for the revival of religion. (*D. Some.*)

Indifference.—I. We may begin by defining what we mean by "Indifference." Now there are always two great periods of difficulty in the history of individual religious belief. The first is the difficulty of accepting a new faith. The greatness of St. Paul's conversion lies here, that it was the turning not of a bad man into a good, but of a sincere bigot from the faith in which he had been nurtured to a faith which he had despised. But there is a second trial belonging to more quiet times. If they who have inherited a settled form of religion are spared much which probes those whose lot it is to have a new creed proposed to them, they have a different danger of their own to face—the danger of holding loosely what they have been familiar with from childhood. Persons belong to the Christian Church by birth, by compliance with certain external usages, but the subject-matter inspires them with little interest. Their religion is unto them a matter of propriety, an element of the social system, but it does not stir the depths of their nature. But now, why may not a man whose tastes so incline him preserve as it were this state of neutrality, without taking any part in the conflicts of thought around him, or the struggles of the kingdom to overcome the ignorance and the sin of the world? It might be answered that a perfect neutrality amid conflicting principles and practices is almost an impossibility. "Indifference" is generally the result of one of two causes—pride of intellect or mental sloth. But the noblest argument against "Indifference," is that indicated in the text. "I have not found thy part fulfilled before God." In those solemn words, as they thrill across the border-line between eternity and time, I seem to hear of a part assigned to every individual, not to accomplish which to the full is a disappointing the very end of our creation. How vast soever be the Divine plan, whatever circles of the universe it may embrace, your life and mine has been knit up therewith. Every child born into the world is designed to contribute to the evolution of the purposes of the everlasting will. And this holds good more especially of religion. There is nothing more remarkable than the manner in which, in all that concerns God's revelation, man has been assumed as a fellow-worker with God. As in the great fundamental truth, the Incarnation, so in every after detail of the eternal plan, the everlasting decree changed not, that the work of religion in the world must be accomplished by and through man. And similarly with the Church of Christ; we may almost trace in its history the part allotted by God to each generation. It was the task of the

early Church to lie hid, like leaven, in the midst of this polluted mass, breathing into the dry bones of this dead civilisation a new and healthier life. It has not perhaps been adequately noted how the existence of the Roman empire was protracted by the fresh vigour which Christianity was secretly throwing into the worn-out system. And now a new work was to be done in God's world. There is no more wonderful chapter of man's history than that which records how tribe after tribe poured down from the north, and upon every one as it drew near, while civil institutions crumbled before them, the Church of the living God laid its hand and moulded out of their fierceness a second and more vigorous civilisation. May we venture to indicate the work which seems allotted to ourselves? It is impossible not to observe two special features of our own age, the concentration of the population in a few centres of industry, and the general diffusion of knowledge. Both these bring with them their trials; both oppose, each its own hindrance to faith and good living. When these obstacles are mastered, and the truth of God has won yet another triumph over what is now, as every trial once was, an unknown difficulty, doubtless some other form of evil will present itself until the victory of the Son of Man is complete. But now, if every generation be thus indeed God's appointed agency for winning some fresh triumph for Him, if we are a link in that chain which connects the beginning with the end, what an argument is here against that cold philosophic indifference in which so many stand aside from the work of God in their day. Shall I hold in my hand an instrument imparted by my Creator, and not use it to the utmost? II. BUT SECONDLY, "INDIFFERENCE" IS THE CONSEQUENCE AND PROOF OF AN IMPERFECT CULTIVATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL MIND AND CHARACTER. God has implanted in us two sets of faculties, those by which we deal with our present existence, and those by which we apprehend things unseen. Reason, prudence, foresight—these are the endowments which qualify us to act upon this world. But there are other endowments vouchsafed unto man. To him alone, of all that walks the earth, is given the power of looking beyond the earth. The one grand note of difference between man and the beasts lies in the simple power to utter the familiar words, "I believe in God." And this high gift carries with it a variety of gifts. It is the Divine ordination which sets the whole race apart as the priests of creation. The direction and exercise of these spiritual instincts, neither on the one hand to allow them to degenerate into bigotry and superstition, nor on the other hand to let them, as we may let them, die out of the soul, is perhaps the loftiest task which God has set us. The man who cultivates only those faculties which are called into play by the affairs of this life cultivates only half of his being. And hence another characteristic of "indifference." To stand aloof from the questions which have to do more immediately with the revelation of God, to have an acute interest in all except the truths, the worship, the progress, the influence of the Church of Christ, is to present the sure marks of an imperfect manhood, to evidence a one-sided development of the powers of the soul. We will not speak now of the selfishness of the attempt to isolate ourselves from the struggles of our contemporaries, to withdraw from the warfare of God, filling up the vacancy of the mind and the life with a thousand self-chosen imaginations and pursuits. It is to the secret world of the human soul that we would now carry down your gaze, and as you gather in the mightiness of its organisation and walk through the chambers of its imagery, summing up all the powers with which its Maker hath equipped it, we bid you note how in the case of the man who lives on in indifference, one portion of the stately fabric lies hopelessly in ruins; how the part that is strongest, is in close contact with that which is weak; how around the well-wrought halls of thought, memory, reason, imagination, lie in disjointed fragments the kindred gifts of reverence, and love, and self-sacrifice, and faith, uncared for and unbuilt up, and so whatever admiration among men the exhibiting some rare mental faculty may procure, the man's part, when set in the light of God's countenance, is seen to be but half performed, the work imperfect before the Lord. (*Bp. Woodford.*)

Spiritual consumption:—I. ITS SYMPTOMS. They are analogous to those of corporeal consumption. 1. Loss of strength to resist the wrong and to do the right. 2. Loss of appetite for holy service, wholesome doctrine. 3. Loss of enjoyment. All complaint; no pleasure in anything. II. ITS CAUSES. Neglect of proper conditions of health. 1. Wholesome food. 2. Suitable exercise. Inaction must lead to disease. "Exercise thyself" rather unto godliness. 3. Pure atmosphere. III. ITS CURES. 1. Appropriate remedial elements. "Balm in Gilead." "The tree of life whose fruit is for the healing of the nations." 2. Suitable applications of these elements. The medicine is of no service unless taken according to truly scientific prescription.

(*Homilist.*) *Spiritual graces need invigoration*:—Would you have and keep up ardent desires? Do as they that would keep in the fire, cherish the sparks, and blow them up to a flame. There is no man lives under the means of grace, and under the discoveries of God and religion, but has his good moods and very lively motions. The waters are stirred many times, take hold of this advantage. Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die, and blow up these sparks into a flame. God has left us enkindling means—prayer, meditation, and the Word. Observe where the bellows blow hardest, and ply that course. The more supernatural things are, there needs more diligence to preserve them. A strange plant needs more care than a native of the soil. Worldly desires, like a nettle, breed of their own accord, but spiritual desires need a great deal of cultivating. (*Thomas Manton.*) *I have not found thy works perfect before God.*—*God will search whether we be perfect*:—First, man's search may be without finding; but now when God searcheth men, He is sure to find men out (Psa. cxxxix. 1). Secondly, man's searching hath ever ignorance foregoing, though after search maybe he comes to know, yet before searching he knows not (Job xxix. 16). God searcheth because He doth know, man because he doth not. Thirdly, man's searching is properly so called; but when searching is spoken of God, it is after the manner of men; God doth rather act a kind of searching, then search indeed. Fourthly, it is man's duty to search if he know not any particular passage of his life, whether it be warrantable or no. Fifthly, man's searching is for himself, that things may appear to himself; but when God searcheth it is that it may be manifest abroad, that a man's self and others may see it. The reasons of this are, first, because it is God's prerogative thus to do, because the perfection of men's works; though men may give a guess at it, yet it is a secret. Secondly, as this is God's prerogative royal, so of all things in the world He will bring that which is secret out, whether men be sincere or no. Thirdly, because it is for the glory of God to search men out. Fourthly, it is for the truth of God; He hath said He will search every one out, as you may see (Job xxxiv. 22). Fifthly, this is for the justice of God, that God should search out every one what he is, and what his works be; how should God judge the world else? The first use may serve to reprove most men generally; we do not consider that God will search us. What a company of pleas are there to do evil? What a company of put offs to do good duties? The second use is to bid us take heed how we hide our sins from others, or from ourselves. The last use is for exhortation. Will God search us out? then we should search ourselves what our works are, whether good or evil; as the apostle saith (2 Cor. xiii. 5). First, consider we can never repent of what is amiss in ourselves, or in our works, except we search ourselves (Lam. i. 43). Secondly, consider it is a mark of the child of God that he doth desire, and is one that doth search himself; nay, he doth not only use all the means he can to do it, but he doth cry to God to help him (Psa. cxxxix. 23). Thirdly, consider, if we do not search ourselves, it will be the worse for us. (*Wm. Fenner, B.D.*) *Perfect the work of grace in the soul*:—"We shall not," says Thomas Manton, "keep what we have received if we do not labour to increase it, as a house begun to be built goeth to decay, and droppeth down more and more, if we do not go on to finish it." Have we not all seen what are commonly called house-carcases standing in desolation, a blot upon the street, and a dead loss to the builder? To-day the slates are falling, to-morrow the windows are broken, and anon timber after timber falls. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard.—*Sardis*:—I. THE MEANS PRESCRIBED FOR THE RESTORATION OF THOSE BACKSLIDERS WHICH WERE FOUND IN THE CHURCH AT SARDIS. Our Lord exhorted them to compare the past with the present state of their religious experience, in which they would perceive a distressing contrast. Such an exercise has a tendency to check arrogance. 1. Remember how you received the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was first revealed to your faith as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour. 2. Remember how you heard the Gospel of Christ. II. Our Lord exhorteth the Church at Sardis to "HOLD FAST." 1. The doctrines of the gospel. 2. The profession of their faith. 3. Their hope. III. Our Lord called upon the Church at Sardis to "REPENT." True repentance includes hope of being restored to the enjoyment of spiritual prosperity. IV. The exhortation of our Lord to the Church at Sardis, is urged by an AWAKENING THREATENING: "If therefore thou shalt not watch," &c. Promise and threatening unite to rouse backsliders. (*J. Hyatt.*) *And hold fast.*—*The duty of holding fast the truth*:—I. WHAT YOU ARE CALLED UPON TO HOLD FAST. You are exhorted to hold fast the truths of the gospel; to lay to heart those precepts, and commands, and promises, which the

great God hath condescended to utter on your account. II. How YOU ARE TO HOLD THESE THINGS FAST. 1. With the assent of your judgment, holding fast that which is good, not suffering the sophistries and false arguments of others to blind and to confound you. 2. With the consent of the heart. 3. With faith. Not a mere historical faith; not a mere speculative faith; but a faith apprehending the greatness of the Son of God. 4. In our lives and conversations; walking in the truth of Jesus. 5. With meekness, but with resolution. 6. With prayer and perseverance. III. WHY YOU ARE TO HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS DELIVERED UNTO YOU. 1. Because of its excellency; the incomparable value of Divine truth. Truth reflects the Divine image; truth attempers the glories of the great God, and exhibits His perfections. 2. Because of the violence and the wrong which were otherwise offered to God. 3. Because of its blessed tendency; for, by making us holier, even in this life, that which we hear makes us happier. 4. You must hold fast the words of sound doctrine, because they affect the great and the coming destinies of the imperishable soul. (*J. T. Judkin, M.A.*)

Ver. 4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis.—*A solemn warning for all Churches*.—I. GENERAL DEFILEMENT. 1. A vast deal of open profession, and but little of sincere religion. You can scarcely meet with a man who does not call himself a Christian, and yet it is equally hard to meet with one who is in the very marrow of his bones thoroughly sanctified to the good work of the kingdom of heaven. We meet with professors by hundreds; but we must expect still to meet with possessors by units. 2. A want of zeal. Ah! we have abundance of cold, calculating Christians, but where are the zealous ones? Where are those who have an impassioned love for souls? 3. The third charge against Sardis was that they did not “look to the things that remained and were ready to die.” This may relate to the poor feeble saints. And what does the Church do now? Do the shepherds go after those that are wounded and sick, and those that are weary? Yes, but how do they speak? They tell them to perform impossible duties—instead of “strengthening the things that remain and are ready to die.” 4. Another charge which God has brought against the Church is, that they were careless about the things which they heard. He says, “Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast; and repent.” If I am wrong upon other points, I am positive that the sin of this age is impurity of doctrine, and laxity of faith. II. SPECIAL PRESERVATION. “Thou hast a few names.” Only a few; not so few as some think, but not as many as others imagine! There is not a church on earth that is so corrupt but has “a few.” Since there are but a few, there ought to be great searchings of heart. Let us look to *our* garments and see whether they be defiled. The fewer the workmen to do the work the greater reason is there that you should be active. Be instant in season and out of season, because there are so few. III. A PECULIAR REWARD. “They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” That is to say, communion with Christ on earth shall be the special reward of those who have not defiled their garments. Go into what company you please, do you meet with many men who hold communion with Christ? Oh, Christian! if thou wouldst have communion with Christ, the special way to win it is by not defiling thy garments, as the Church has done. “They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” 1. This refers to justification. “They shall walk in white”; that is, they shall enjoy a constant sense of their own justification by faith; they shall understand that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, that they have been washed and made whiter than snow, and purified and made more cleanly than wool. 2. Again, it refers to joy and gladness: for white robes were holiday dresses among the Jews. Let thy garments be always white, for God hath accepted thy works.” 3. And lastly, it refers to walking in white before the throne of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The believers at Sardis*.—I. THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE HERE SPOKEN OF WERE TRULY HOLY. Those men were the glory of their Church; and we might have expected that the heavenly purity of their principles and their conduct would have shed around them a highly beneficial influence, and would have induced many others to have pursued along with them a course so splendid in itself, and so happy and brilliant in its termination. II. The passage represents these truly holy persons as only FEW IN NUMBER. The truly holy, in every age of the world have borne but a very small proportion to the great mass of mankind. III. These holy persons were found in a PLACE WHERE GREAT DEGENERACY PREVAILED. Religion is like the snowdrop that flowers amid the colds and frosts of winter, or like the violet that blooms in all the beauties of its varied

and vivid tints, and breathes all the richness of its fragrance unhurt by the foul and noxious weeds that flourish in its immediate vicinity. IV. The few holy persons in the church at Sardis had THE PROMISE OF GREAT HONOUR BEING CONFERRED UPON THEM. White, in the inspired volume, is frequently used to denote the holiness of the Christian character, and, at the same time, to represent the success, the prosperity, and the honour which all enjoy who possess it. (*John Johnstone*.)

Sardis :—I. THE COMMENDATION AND THE HONOUR WHICH OUR LORD BESTOWED UPON THE FEW EXEMPLARY CHARACTERS IN THE CHURCH AT SARDIS.

1. Garment is put for a holy life answerable to a profession of discipleship to Jesus Christ. There were a few disciples in the church at Sardis who were clothed with the garment of humility: "as the elect of God, holy and beloved," they had "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness," and "long-suffering," and had been enabled "to adorn the doctrine of God," their "Saviour," by a holy and uniform consistency of conduct. 2. When we consider the power, the subtlety, the enmity, and the vigilance of Satan; and the innumerable sources of seduction by which the people of God are constantly surrounded; and the many sinful propensities that lodge within their own hearts, we are surprised that any of them pass through life without defiling their garments. Nothing could be more unaccountable, did we not know the cause of their preservation. They "are kept by the power of God," or it would be impossible they could stand secure from falling, even for a moment! II. THE DISTINGUISHED HONOUR WHICH OUR LORD PROMISED TO CONFER UPON THOSE CHRISTIANS IN SARDIS WHO HAD NOT DEFILED THEIR GARMENTS.

3. Our Lord gives encouragement to His faithful disciples, by assuring them of His final testimony of approbation. "I will confess His name before my father, and before His angels." (*J. Hyatt*.) *Christian life has power to resist adverse influences* :—There is nothing on earth that has such power to destroy Christian life as a society of men who bear the name of Christ without manifesting His spirit and life. A dead Church is a mightier obstacle to Christian vitality than the influences of the world or the sneers of the keenest infidelity; it freezes the influence of truth, it paralyses the power of prayer, it lays its cold hand on the pulses of the Christian's faith, chilling them into a death-like sleep. But yet, with that fact before us, we shall try to show that every Christian may overcome those influences which hinder his life. We shall try to show that we have no right to be weak Christians, moulded by social circumstances, but are bound to be Christians whose deep life makes circumstances its servants.

I. TRUE CHRISTIANITY CAN CONQUER ADVERSE SOCIAL INFLUENCES. Now here it must be granted as an obvious fact that some men are more liable to be swayed by social influences than others. Those whose character is weak, and whose feelings are strong and undisciplined, are doubtless more easily carried away by mere impulse than men of naturally strong character and power of self-control. But yet it is possible for us to gain an elevation above such influences, for in Christianity we can discern the elements of a power which will confer it. We shall perceive this by glancing briefly at the manner in which circumstances and social influences attain their greatest sway over men; and then by showing how, in a true Christian life, the sources of that power are overcome.

1. The absence of a ruling emotion is one great element in the power of circumstances. Now true Christianity is essentially the enthronement of one feeling in the heart—the love of God through Christ, and because that feeling ascends to the eternal and unchanging, it must pre-eminently give a firmness to the character that defies the force of circumstances. 2. The absence of purpose in life is the other element in the power of circumstances, for it is too obvious to need illustration, that a purposeless life must be the creature of circumstances, and at the mercy of every influence. Now a true Christian life-purpose is a life-surrender to God; it is to live constantly as in the eye of the Eternal King, to exist that we may be self-consecrated to Christ and attain a resemblance to Him; a purpose not visionary but sublime—a purpose not attained in the middle of life nor at life's close, but going onward into the life of boundless ages. But it will be more obvious that such an aim in life must shut out the force of circumstances, from the fact that it can only be lived through an independent and individual conviction of Christian truth. We want men who are not echoes, but voices; men who draw their inspiration from prayer rather than from preaching, from individual self-consecration, and not from collected sympathy. Then should we feel less that external things can effect the grandeur and earnestness of our Christian life. And one other fact will bring all this to a personal and direct application. We must be thus conquerors over circumstances and opposing forces,

or our Christianity will ever be weak. We must be men, not spiritual infants, or we shall lose our Christian mission in life. II. THIS CONQUEST CONTAINS IN ITSELF THE ELEMENTS OF EVERLASTING BLESSEDNESS. Who does not feel it better to be alone with Christ in struggling with opposing influences than to be up-borne by the current of popularity and stimulated by the flattery or friendship of men? And when thus we gain, through our own battle, a deeper insight into the mystery of that life of Jesus, and have the consciousness of a growing fellowship with Him, we are already being clothed in the white garments of eternity, and walking with the Son of God. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The undefiled few*:—I. THE UNDEFILED FEW. II. THE PRESENT POWER OF CHRIST'S UNDEFILED FEW. It would appear to be one of the Divine arrangements that the many should be blessed in the power and influence of the few. No single phase of human life but has been lifted up into dignity for ever through the example of some noble moral hero. There are ever the few in political life who see clearly, grasp principles vigorously, and lead aright the unthinking many. There are many students in the walks of science and literature who never reach beyond the common level, and in each age there are a few men of genius like Bacon, and Butler, and Newton, and Herschell, who rise high up above their fellows, the giants of the intellectual world. The principle may even be seen working within the Church. III. THE FUTURE GLORY OF CHRIST'S UNDEFILED FEW. 1. They who struggle after goodness now shall find themselves then settled in goodness for ever. He who tries to reach Christlike purity daily finds his dangers growing less, his temptations becoming fewer, his struggles ever more surely ending in the victory of the good. 2. Above all, these undefiled few shall have a communion with Christ of an extraordinary intimacy and preciousness. "With Me." (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *The two garments*:—The words "garment," "robe" and "raiment" are used in the Scriptures to typify character. When a man repents of sin and joins himself by faith to Jesus Christ, he is clothed with a new nature. He "puts on Christ," so that there is not only an inward faith in Christ, but some good degree of outward resemblance in daily conduct. This may be called the garment of grace. It means Christian character. Now character is not determined by a single act, but by habitual conduct. It is a fabric made up of thousands of threads, and put together by uncounted stitches. However thorough may be the cleansing process wrought upon the heart at the time of conversion, yet no one becomes absolutely spotless. We live also in a defiling world. If we walk through certain streets in this city we must be on the lookout, or our clothes will become besmirched. A good man goes to his place of business and finds himself in the atmosphere of Mammon. It is every citizen's duty to take a citizen's part in politics; but when he becomes a zealous partisan there is plenty of "pitch" around in the caucus and the convention, and unless he is a conscientious man he is apt to be defiled. In social life he encounters the prevailing trend for show and self-indulgence and expensive living. On a white surface the slightest spot shows painfully; and it is no easy thing to keep the spiritual raiment clean. Yet by the indwelling power of Christ's grace there are those "even in Sardis" who keep their spiritual garments comparatively clean. If a true follower of Christ becomes soiled with impurity, he grieves over it, repents of it, and hastens to that Saviour who pardons and restores. By such processes can only the garment of grace be kept from utter disfigurement and defilement. By and by this garment of grace shall be laid aside for the garment of glory. The one is for time; the other is for eternity. The first garment is a Christian character formed by the regenerating Spirit of God in this world. The other is a Christian character completed, consummated, and glorified in that world wherein entereth nothing whatsoever that defileth. They "walk with Jesus in white, for they are worthy." Determine that whatever others may do you will be a thorough and consecrated servant of your Master, "even in Sardis." Determine that you will keep the garment of character undefiled. If all Sardis is infected with the lust of gold, let not the canker eat into your soul. However many in Sardis rush off into frivolities and into these scenes of folly that make deathbeds terrible, do you choose rather the joys of holy converse with the Master in the "upper chamber." (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *The few in Sardis*:—I. THE RARITY of those who are the true saints on the earth. Sadly the truth presses on every mind that it is the many who are sluggish and fruitless, it is only the few who are faithful. A little band of executive Church labourers produce what each year gathers. II. Their PURITY. They "have not defiled their garments." Holiness of life is more than vividness of experience. III. THE PROSPECT of

the saints. 1. The word here rendered "walk" means to accompany around. Thence it is applied to sharing the continuous lot of one with whom we dwell. 2. "They shall walk with Me." The companionship is that of Christ Himself, for it is He that is here speaking. 3. It is the symbol of glory hereinafter to be revealed to believers. Here are two thoughts distinctly suggested, each of which has great value. The one is that the glory of that future state is not so much in its triumphs and trophies as in its graces. The glory is its sinlessness, its perfect freedom from all pollution. So it is of much more importance what we shall be than what we shall have. Then the other thought is that holiness here is its own reward, here and yonder too. IV. THE PREROGATIVE of the saints. "They are worthy." The significance of this statement takes its force from the connection in which it stands. One prerogative is asserted in their behalf; they are proper companions for God's Son. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The duty of maintaining an unsullied character*.—I. CONSIDER THE GREAT DIFFICULTY OF PRESERVING INNOCENCE AMIDST SURROUNDING CORRUPTION. 1. The natural abhorrence which rises in the breast at the first appearance of its detestable form is insensibly weakened and effaced by repeated views of it. There is, besides, in the view of a multitude running to do evil, a temptation of peculiar force. 2. Amidst the universal infection of vice some men there are whose particular constitution, or want of experience in the ways of the world, expose them greatly to its deadly influence. The man of good nature, and of an easy, pliable temper, who suspects not the treachery of others, becomes an easy prey to the temptations of the wicked. II. THE DIGNITY AND EXCELLENCE OF THAT MAN WHO, NOTWITHSTANDING EVERY ASSAULT, MAINTAINS AN UNSULLIED CHARACTER. III. ENFORCE THE IMITATION OF CHRIST'S EXAMPLE BY THE GREAT MOTIVE MENTIONED HERE. IV. THE REASON FOR CONFERRING SUCH HONOURS ON THE GOOD AND VIRTUOUS. "They are worthy." (*J. Main, D.D.*) *God's little remnant keeping their garments clean in an evil day*.—I. OFFER A FEW PROPOSITIONS CONCERNING THIS REMNANT. 1. God's remnant are a holy people. They are a set of men that study to keep clean garments. 2. God has a special eye of favour and kindness on this remnant in a sinful and declining time. II. SHOW THAT CHRIST HAS A HIGH VALUE FOR THIS REMNANT. 1. Consider what an account He makes of them when compared with the rest of the world (*Isa. xliii. 4; Psa. cxix. 119; Lam. iv. 2*). 2. That this little remnant are worthy on Christ's account will appear if we consider the names and compellations that He gives them (*Mal. iii. 17*). 3. Consider the endeared relations they stand under unto Him. There is a legal, a moral, and a mystical union between Him and them. 4. That they are worthy in His esteem appears from what He does for them (*Rev. i. 5; Heb. viii. 12, iv. 16*). III. INQUIRE INTO WHAT IS IMPORTED IN THE REMNANT KEEPING THEIR GARMENTS CLEAN. 1. That even God's remnant are not without danger of defiling themselves with the sins and defections of their day. 2. That foul garments are very unbecoming and unsuitable unto God's remnant. A careful study of universal obedience unto all known and commanded duties. A holy caution and tenderness in guarding against all sin, especially the prevailing sins of the day. IV. INQUIRE INTO THE IMPORT OF THE CONSOLATORY PROMISE MADE UNTO THE REMNANT THAT KEEP THEIR GARMENTS CLEAN. 1. What is imported in walking with Him? (1) It necessarily supposes the soul's subsistence in a separate state, or after its separation from the body, otherwise it could not be said to walk with Him. (2) Its activity. (3) Perfect peace and agreement between Christ and men. (4) Intimacy. (5) Full pleasure, satisfaction, and complacency. 2. What is imported in walking with Him in white? (1) That then all their black and beggarly garments shall be laid aside. (2) That perfect holiness shall then be their adornment. (3) Victory over all their enemies, whether outward or inward. (4) High honour. (5) Priestly service. (6) A blessed conformity between Christ and them. (7) The beauty of the Lord their God will then be upon them. V. INQUIRE INTO THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE DUTY AND THE PRIVILEGE, BETWEEN KEEPING THE GARMENTS CLEAN AND WALKING WITH CHRIST IN WHITE. 1. Negatively there is no connection of merit, as if our keeping of clean garments did deserve that we should walk with Christ in white. 2. Positively there is—(1) A connection of decree or purpose in this matter. (2) A connection of promise. (3) A connection of meetness or congruity. (4) A connection of evidence. Application: 1. Holiness is to be studied and pursued, however it may be ridiculed and mocked at by a profane world. 2. They labour under a mistake who think or say that it is a vain or "unprofitable thing to serve the Lord" and to keep His way. 3. Gospel purity and holiness is not such a common thing

as the world apprehends. 4. See hence what it is that sweetens the pale countenance of the king of terrors to believers: it is this, they see that upon the back of death they will be admitted to walk with Christ in white. (*John Erskine, D.D.*)

Sardis :—In the case of the Church at Sardis, we observe—I. THE SAD SPECTACLE OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSION. The Church is represented as having only a name to live. The world sometimes sees the worst side, and God the best, but in Sardis it was the opposite. The word "dead," however, is not used absolutely, but comparatively, for there were certain rare plants in this desert of decaying vegetation that required to be watched and strengthened. Yet the faith and virtue of these were in danger. 1. There were some things ready to die. What things? Faith, love, zeal, hope. 2. Things requiring to be strengthened. Weak and incipient virtue, languishing graces, and faint desires. Things that are decaying need cherishing. Learn a lesson of the gardener, and nurse the exotics of the soul. Give thy soul room and stimulus and appropriate exercise. 3. Things that needed remembrance. Appeal to experience, to the memory of former days and old associations. We may forget our past history and so live a sort of fragmentary life. 4. Things that needed to be repented of. Dereliction of duty, loss of faith, decay of love. II. THE CHEERING SPECTACLE OF RELIGIOUS FIDELITY. "Thou hast a few names," &c. 1. Redeeming features in the most sombre landscapes. There is always a green spot in the desert. 2. The saints in Sardis were in striking contrast to the society around them. They were pure amidst impurity, holy among the vile. They closed their eyes to the brilliant illusions, their ears to the flattering enticements, or corrupt pagan society. III. THE GLORIOUS SPECTACLE OF THE CORONATION AND TRIUMPH OF FAITH. "They shall," &c. Weigh the reward thus symbolically described. 1. Heaven's purity for the pure on earth. 2. Enrolment in the register of heaven for those who have held fast the faith of the saints. 3. Recognition before God and the angels for those who, though scorned of men, are eternally honoured by God. (*W. E. Daly, B.A.*)

Purity rewarded :—True, all our lives long we shall be bound to refrain our soul and keep it low; but what then? For the books we now forbear to read, we shall one day be endued with wisdom and knowledge. For the music we will not listen to, we shall join in the song of the redeemed. For the pictures from which we turn, we shall gaze unabashed on the beatific vision. For the companionship we shun, we shall be welcomed into angelic society and the communion of triumphant saints. For the pleasures we miss, we shall abide, and evermore abide, in the rapture of heaven. (*Christina G. Rossetti.*)

Pure amidst defilement :—A writer tells of going with a party down into a coal mine. On the other side of the gangway grew a plant which was perfectly white. The visitors were astonished that there, where the coal-dust was continually flying, this little plant should be so pure and white. A miner who was with them took a handful of the black dust and threw it upon the plant; but not a particle adhered. Every atom of the dust rolled off. The visitors repeated the experiment, but the coal-dust would not cling. There was a wonderful enamel on the folds of the white plant to which no finest specks could adhere. Living there amid clouds of black dust, nothing could stain the snowy whiteness. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

They shall walk with Me in white.—Walking in white :—I. THE PROMISE OF CONTINUOUS AND PROGRESSIVE ACTIVITY. "They shall walk." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." "They shall walk" in all the energies of a constant activity, far more intense than it was at its highest here, and yet never, by one hair's breadth, trenching upon the serenity of that perpetual repose. And then there is the other thought too involved in that pregnant word, of continuous advancement, growing every moment nearer and nearer to the true centre of our souls, and up into the loftiness of perfection. II. THE PROMISE OF COMPANIONSHIP WITH CHRIST. If there be this promised union, it can only be because of the completeness of sympathy and the likeness of character between Christ and His companions. The unity between Christ and His followers in the heavens is but the carrying into perfectness of the imperfect union that makes all the real blessedness of life here upon earth. III. THE PROMISE OF THE PERFECTION OF PURITY. Perhaps we are to think of a glorified body as being the white garment. Perhaps it may be rather that the image expresses simply the conception of entire moral purity, but in either case it means the loftiest manifestation of the most perfect Christlike beauty as granted to all His followers. IV. THE CONDITION OF ALL THESE PROMISES. There is a congruity and proportion between the earthly life and the future life. Heaven is but the life of earth prolonged and perfected by the dropping away of all the evil, the strengthening and lifting to completeness of all the good. And the only

thing that fits a man for the white robe of glory is purity of character down here on earth. There is nothing said here directly about the means by which that purity can be attained or maintained. That is sufficiently taught us in other places, but what in this saying Christ insists upon is that, however it is got, it must be got, and that there is no life of blessedness, of holiness and glory, beyond the grave, except for those for whom there is the life of aspiration after, and in some real measure possession of, moral purity and righteousness and goodness here upon earth. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **He that overcometh . . . shall be clothed in white raiment.**—*The battle, the victory, and the reward*:—I. A CONFLICT ENGAGED IN. The Christian has the peace of God, and is at peace with God; but just because he is so, he is at war with everything that wars with God. 1. The first of the Christian's enemies is his own sinful nature. And I am not sure but that is the most dangerous of all his enemies. A foe in the citadel is a thousand times worse than an enemy without. The particular form which this warfare may assume in the individual depends very much upon the natural temperament and previous habits of the man. We have all some sin which most easily besets us. This is the key to the position, like the farmhouse on the field of Waterloo; and, therefore, each principle is anxious to secure it as its own. Nay, not only this; it is here that the new nature is weakest; for as, when one has had a severe inflammation, it leaves, on recovery, a local weakness, which makes itself felt on the least exposure to cold or damp; so, when a man has been addicted to some sin, then, even after his conversion, there, where he formerly was worst, is now his weakest point, and it is in connection with it that his sorest conflicts are. In the light of these things, we cannot wonder that our life is called a fight. 2. But there are other enemies without the fortress, cunningly seeking to tempt us to yield to their entreaties. I mention, therefore, secondly, among our adversaries, the evil men of the world, who approach us ever in a most insidious style. They come under colour of being our servants, and ministering to our pleasure; but alas! it is only that they may remain to be our lords. 3. I mention as another foe the great arch-enemy of God and man—Satan. His efforts, indeed, are inseparably connected with those other two of which I have spoken, He is the general by whom evil men are marshalled for the fight; and as a spiritual being, intimately acquainted with our spiritual nature, he knows how best to take advantage of our still remaining sin. II. A VICTORY WON. 1. The agent by whom this victory is won. In one sense it is the believer who wins it; in another, it is won for him; and it is to the latter aspect of it that I would first look. This conquest is obtained for us by the Great Captain of our Salvation, Jesus Christ; and there are two ways in which He vanquishes our enemy. In the first place, He has already overcome him on the cross; so that we have not now to deal with a foe in his pristine strength, but rather with one crestfallen and defeated. Nor is this all; it was as our representative that Jesus vanquished him; and so he cannot really harm us, however much he may annoy and disturb. Then this death of Christ has also slain the enmity of our hearts; for, if we really believe in Him, "our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin should be destroyed." Hence our union to Jesus Christ ensures our victory. But Jesus vanquishes our enemy for us, secondly, by the gift and gracious indwelling of His Holy Spirit. He so quickens our conscience, that we shrink from sins of which formerly we would have thought but little; and He works in us a kind of instinctive intuition, by which we know that we are in the presence of evil, and hasten away from its influence. Thus, in Christ for us, and Christ in us, the victory is won! 2. But a word or two as to the means on our part by which the agency of Christ and His Spirit is secured on our behalf. That means on our part is faith. This may be illustrated by the case of one travelling in a foreign land. He is a British subject, and as such he has the weight and influence of the whole British empire at his back, so that he is safe from injury or insult, and sure, if any such be offered to him, that it will be promptly and efficiently checked. But if he cannot plead that he is a citizen of this favoured land, and has to stand alone, he is sure, in a despotic country, to be very cavalierly and even cruelly dealt with, if he should have the misfortune to fall out with its authorities. Now it is just so here; by faith the believer is connected with Christ—one with Him—and a citizen of heaven. Hence, in his warfare, he has all the power of heaven behind him; and the man who has God on his side is sure to be victorious. But in yet another aspect, faith is seen as the means of victory; for it is the eye of the soul, by which the things of the spiritual world are beheld; and by

bringing the soul under the influence of "the powers of the world to come," it encourages it in the battle, and determines it not to yield. It shows him the recompense of the reward: the white raiment; the victor's palm; the hero's crown; and the throne of royal honour. And thus it raises him above the sphere of earth's temptations, and makes him proof against the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely. 3. But now let us look at the time when this victory is obtained. In one sense, the believer is daily winning victories. Israel, of old, crossed the Jordan to fight; but we cross it to reign; and from the moment of our dissolution we have no more to do with temptation. III. THE BLESSING HERE PROMISED. 1. The victor shall be "clothed in white raiment." This, then, imports that the conqueror's condition will be one of pure joy, and joyful purity. 2. "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." The allusion of this phrase is supposed to be to the genealogical tables of the Jews, out of which a man's name was blotted when he died; and the meaning is, that Jesus will not blot such a victor's name out of the register of His redeemed ones. Now this phrase speaks of many things comforting to the Christian. It tells of salvation assured to him; and it declares, moreover, that Jesus has a care for him as an individual, and has his name enrolled among the denizens of bliss. 3. "I will confess his name before my Father and His angels"; that is, He will own the conqueror as His, and claim salvation in His name. Nay, it is more than this; it is a public introduction of the believer to heaven, and a proclamation there of the victory which he has obtained. Compared with this, what are earthly decorations for valour? (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The blessedness of overcoming*.—I. WHAT ARE WE TO OVERCOME? 1. Self. (1) In its hostility (Rom. viii. 7). (2) In its indifference (Acts xxiv. 25). (3) In its insincerity (Jer. xvii. 9). 2. World. (1) In its frowns (James iv. 4). (2) In its flatteries (Prov. i. 10). (3) In its applauses (Acts xii. 22). 3. Death. (1) In the fears of his approach (Heb. ii. 15). (2) In the pains of his attack (1 Cor. xv. 55). (3) In the desolations of his triumph (John xi. 25, 26). II. HOW ARE WE TO OVERCOME? 1. By thought. "I thought on my ways." 2. By purpose. 3. By faith. (1) Lively. (2) Progressive. (3) Saving. 4. By effort. (1) Cheerful. (2) Continual. (3) Mighty. III. THE RESULTS OF OVERCOMING. 1. A pure and spotless nature. 2. An enduring name. 3. A public honour. (*C. L. Burdick.*) *Earnestness in religion*.—Such a topic has great difficulty to lay any hold on the mind—almost even to engage the attention. We all know the effect of perfect familiarity and endless reiteration. But more than so;—this great familiar truth seems to suffer in its power of interesting men by the very fullness of its evidence, and of the conviction with which it is admitted. Whatever be the explanation, the fact is evident, that the actual power of this great principle of truth (namely, the absolute necessity of being in earnest about our highest interest) seems to be repressed, in consequence of the ready and complete acknowledgment it obtains in the mind. It seems to go to sleep there, because it holds its place certainly—is not contradicted—and cannot be expelled. If some serious doubts could be raised upon it, they might make the matter interesting—they might turn and fix thought upon it. Perhaps another thing that causes this general solemn admonition (to be in earnest about our highest interests) to come with less force, is the circumstance that it is applicable and pertinent to all. It concerns *me*, not more than all these millions. Again, there is far too little of the serious practice of bringing as near together in view as thought can do it, the two orders of things which both belong to us—so belong to us that they must both be taken into our practical adjustment. There is the world we are in, the object of our senses; and a world to which we are to go, the object of our faith. There is this short life—and an endless one. There are the pains and delights of mortality—and the joys or woes of eternity. Now unless a man really will set himself, in serious thought, to the comparative estimate of these, and that too as an estimate to be made on his own account, how powerless on him must be the call that tells him he must be "in earnest!" Another thing may be added to this account of causes tending to frustrate the injunction to be in earnest about our highest concerns; namely, that the mind willingly takes a perverse advantage of the obscurity of the objects of our faith, and for the incompetence of our faculties for apprehending them. There is a willingness even to make the veil still more thick, and reduce the glimmering to utter darkness, as strengthening the excuse. "We do not know how to carry our thoughts from this scene into that. It is like entering a mysterious and visionary wilderness. It is evidently implied to us, by the fact as it stands, that the opening of that scene upon us now would confound us in all our business here. Were it not best to be content to mind chiefly our duty

here; and when it shall be God's will and time, He will show us what there is yonder!" Partial truth thus perversely applied, tends to cherish and excuse an indisposition to look forward in contemplations of hereafter; and this indisposition, excused or protected by this allegation, defeats the force of the call, the summons, to be in earnest about our highest interests. There is another pernicious practical deception, through which the force of this call to earnestness is defeated, and the strong necessity which it urges is evaded: that is, the not recognising in the parts of life, the grand duty and interest which yet is acknowledged to belong to it as a whole. "This day is not much," a man thinks, "nor this week—a particle only in so ample a thing as all life." We add only one more description of delusive feeling tending to frustrate the admonitions to an earnest intentness on the great object—namely, a soothing self-assurance, founded the man can hardly explain on what, that some way or other, a thing which is so essentially important, will be effected, surely must be effected, because it is so indispensable. A man says, "I am not mad. I surely—surely—shall not lose my soul." As if there must be something in the very order of nature to prevent anything going so far wrong as that. Sometimes particular circumstances in a man's history are suffered to excite in him a kind of superstitious hope. Perhaps, for instance, in his childhood or since, he was saved from peril or death in some very remarkable manner. His friends thought that this must surely be a propitious omen; and he, too, is willing to persuade himself so. Perhaps very pious persons have taken a particular interest about him; he knows he has been the subject of many prayers. So many deceptive notions may contribute to a vague sort of assurance that a man will not always neglect religion, though he is doing so now, and is in no serious disposition to do otherwise. And, in addition to all, there is that unthinking and unscriptural manner of considering and carelessly throwing ourselves upon the infinite goodness of God. (*J. Foster.*)

I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life.—The Book of Life:—I. THE BOOK. There is a great deal in the Apocalypse about this book of the living, or "of life." And, like the rest of its imagery, the symbol finally reposes upon the Old Testament cycle of metaphor (*Exod. xxxii. 32; Psa. lxi. 28, lxxxvii. 6; Isa. iv. 3; Dan. xii. 1*). Coming to the New Testament, we find, outside of the Apocalypse, comparatively few references. But see *Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Heb. xii. 23*). So then, to be "written in the Book of Life" is to be included amongst those who truly live. St. John, in his Gospel and Epistle, dwells with even more emphasis than the other writers of the New Testament on the great central thought that the deepest conception of Christ's work to men is that He is the Source of life. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life." This symbol implies, too, that they who truly live, live by Jesus Christ, and by Him alone. It is "the Lamb's Book of Life." In His character of the Lamb—that is, of the Sacrifice for the sins of the world—slain for us all, He has made it possible that any names should be written on that page. Then, again, note how this symbol suggests to us that to be enrolled in the Book is to be a citizen of heaven. The name being "written in heaven" implies that the true native soil of the man is where his name is written. He is inscribed on the register of the community to which He belongs. He lives in a far-away colony, but he is a native of the metropolis. Again, let me remind you that to be written in that Book implies being the objects of Divine energy and Divine love. "I know thee by name" said the Divine voice, through the prophet, to the Great Conqueror before He was born. "I know thee by name," saith the Lord, to each of us, if our hearts are humbly trusting in His Divine power.

II. THE INSCRIPTION OF THE NAMES. Now there are two passages in this Book of the Revelation which seem to say that the names are written "before the foundation of the world." I am not going to plunge into discussions far beyond our reach, but I may remind you that such a statement says nothing about the inscription of the names which is not true about all events in time. So, leaving that ideal and eternal inscription of the names in the obscurity which cannot be dispelled, we shall be more usefully employed in asking what, so far as concerns us, are the conditions on which we may become possessors of that Divine life from Jesus Christ, and citizens of the heavens? Faith in Christ brings us into the possession of eternal life from Him, makes us citizens of His kingdom, and objects of His care. Jesus calls us all to Himself. Do like the man in the "Pilgrim's Progress," who went up to the writer at the table, with the ink-horn before him, and said to him, "Set down my name," and so subscribed with his hand to the mighty God of Jacob.

III. THE PURGING OF THE ROLL. It seems to me that the fair implication of the words of my text is that

the victor's name remains, and the name of the vanquished is blotted out. Why should we be exhorted to "hold fast our crown, that no man may take it," if it is impossible for the crown ever to drop from the brow upon which it was once laid? No man can take it unless we "let" him, but our letting him is a conceivable alternative. And therefore the exhortations and appeals and warnings of Scripture come to us with eminent force. And how is that apostasy to be prevented, and that retention of the name on the roll-call to be secured? The answer is a very plain one—"To him that overcometh." The only way by which a man may keep his name on the effective muster-roll of Christ's army is by continual contest and conquest.

IV. THE CONFESSION OF THE NAMES. There comes a time of blessed certainty, when Christ's confession will transform all our hesitations into peaceful assurance, when He shall stoop from His throne, and Himself shall say, in the day when He makes up His jewels, "This, and that, and that man belong indeed to Me." Men have thrown away their lives to get a word in a despatch, or from a commanding officer; and men have lived long years stimulated to efforts and sacrifices by the hope of having a line in the chronicles of their country. But what is all other fame to Christ's recognising me for His? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Book of Life*.—I. As its name implies, this is the roll of the living members of His Church. Very much as in some of our ancient cities there is a register kept of the freemen, from which their names are struck off at death, so the true citizens of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, are registered on high. There is only this important difference between the two cases. Christ's freed men never die. They shall not be hurt by the second death. II. Perhaps we long to obtain one glance at its contents, and think it would afford us exceeding comfort if we might read our own name, and the names of those dear to us, inscribed on its pages. But this may not be. The discovery would probably lead to self-confidence and presumption as regards ourselves, and a fatal indifference to the eternal welfare of others. We might cease to watch and pray, and might neglect the appointed means of grace. Is, then, that Book so high above our present reach that we have practically nothing to do with it at all? If so, why should it be so often mentioned, and what is the value of this promise? Assuredly there is one way in which we may obtain some insight into its contents. The Lord, and he were, writes a duplicate of them on the hearts and lives of His people. III. This now mysterious record will be referred to by the Judge of quick and dead, and read out before the assembled myriads of mankind. What astounding disclosures will then be made! (*W. Burnett, M.A.*) *Written in heaven*.—I. THERE ARE NAMES WRITTEN IN HEAVEN WHICH ARE UNKNOWN ON EARTH. Who are the world's greatest men? Those who are doing the noblest acts, living the purest lives, suffering the most for righteousness' sake, making the greatest sacrifices for the common good; the greatest men are not necessarily notorious politicians, vocalists, tragedians, capitalists, orators, and soldiers. Now of these really greatest men we know little or nothing; they live in simplicity, obscurity, and poverty; the world is not aware of them, bestowing upon them neither titles nor rewards. But they are known by Him whose eye seeth every precious thing. A true art critic entering a second-hand shop will detect a masterpiece when it is nearly buried in confusion and rubbish. It may be covered with dust, the colours blackened by neglect, boasting no gold frame, and the crowd pass it by with contempt, as not worth sixpence, but the true critic discerns it at a glance. So God recognises merit before it gets into a gold frame; He knows the glorious work of His own hand when found in obscurity, want, suffering, and deepest obloquy and humiliation. Thousands of names are written in heaven as heroes which are not found on Fame's eternal bead-roll. II. IF OUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN, WE NEED CARE LITTLE WHETHER THEY ARE WRITTEN ELSEWHERE. We have a name. That is a grand thing, it means much. We are not numbered, we are all called by our names. We have a distinct and an immortal personality, we are not merely links in a series. We require that our name shall be written somewhere; we are not content to drop out of the universe, and be lost; we must be registered, recognised, remembered. To be written in heaven is supreme fame. It is high above all earthly peerages as the stars are above the mountain tops. To be written in heaven is immortal fame. By strange accidents a man's name once written in great bead-rolls may get obliterated. III. IF OUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN, THEY OUGHT TO BE WRITTEN THERE AS LABOURERS. IV. IF OUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN, LET US TAKE CARE THAT THEY ARE NOT BLOTTED OUT. Let us watch lest our name should be struck from the roll of honour. V. IF OUR NAMES ARE NOT WRITTEN IN HEAVEN, LET US AT ONCE GET THEM WRITTEN THERE. How near

many people come to the kingdom, and yet never get into it! Some of these are written in the reports of the Church, and yet do not get their names inscribed in the book of life. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Ver. 6. Hear what the Spirit saith.—*The message to the Churches:—*I. EVERY CHURCH OF CHRIST HAS AN ORGANIC LIFE OF ITS OWN. This is not only distinct from the life of any other church, but even distinct from the life of its members. It is perhaps one of the most noticeable of the faults of modern Christians, that they are trying to lose their individuality in the mass, hoping thereby to evade responsibility and to shirk duty. To sink a Christian out of responsibility by absorbing him into a church, is like sinking a soldier in an army; he only passes under more rigid rules and only shows more conspicuously. II. EVERY CHURCH HAS AN ORGANIC HISTORY OF ITS OWN, WHICH VERY LIKELY MAKES UP ITS ANNALS. Get some aged people together on an anniversary, and a quiet stranger might soon ascertain that every church has a special history just as striking as these had in Asia Minor, and as precious. In one year, doubtless, there was a man whose behaviour or misfortunes gave the people a world of trouble; in another year, there was a man who gave them a world of help. One man failed in business, and that shook the church badly; then a man grew suddenly wealthy, and that saved the church. Let us stop and think how vital, how positively alive and instinct with nervous and palpitating existence, every established organisation comes eventually to be. "This and that man was born in her." III. EVERY CHURCH HAS AN ORGANIC CHARACTERISTIC OF ITS OWN, and this is derived from the social and personal life of those who compose and manage it. Just as when we split a rock in a quarry into layers, traces will be found in it of lines which the sea waves made there ages ago while the sand was washed into place by the tides and compacted into stone; so when we read the annals of any old congregation, we shall find how certain epochs were fashioned. Sometimes it was the half-dozen elders that gave form to all the church life. Sometimes the deacons drew a line of demarcation. Sometimes a few restless women, sometimes a few uncomfortable men, set the congregation on fire. Sometimes it was the sewing-society, and very often it was the choir. IV. EVERY CHURCH HAS AN ORGANIC POWER OF ITS OWN. This ability for usefulness is entirely distinct from, and superadded to, the influence exerted by individuals. In union there is strength. V. Finally, there is given us here the lesson that EVERY CHURCH HAS AN ORGANIC MORTALITY OF ITS OWN. It is possible for it to become actually extinct, whenever it is cast out by God. They say there is a star-fish in the Caledonian lakes, sometimes dredged up from the deep water. It looks firm and strong, most compactly put together. But the moment you pull off one of its many branching limbs, no matter how small it may be, the singular creature begins itself to dislocate the rest with wonderful celerity of contortions, throwing away its radiate arms and jerking from their sockets its members, until the entire body is in shapeless wreck and confusion of death, and nothing remains of what was one of the most exquisitely beautiful forms in nature, save a hundred wriggling fragments, each repulsive, and dying by suicide. Those seven fair churches went into sudden and remediless ruin. So any church may go. Once rejected of God, congregations generally hurry themselves into dissolution with reckless bickerings and quarrels; and the end comes swiftly. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-13. Philadelphia.—*Philadelphia—the patient Church:—*Philadelphia furnishes us with the exemplar of the patient church; the exercise and training of patience is its peculiar call, and the perfection of patience is its reward. This message is one of high commendation and encouragement; although in its own consciousness, and in the regard of others, the condition of the church might seem pitiful, even deserving of rebuke. Those who have a wide experience of Christian churches and a sympathetic spirit will know how Philadelphia felt. The consciousness of their feebleness was dominant. Their resources seemed insufficient for the demand made on them. Theirs was a great occasion, and a distressing inability to meet it; overtaxed energy, urgent necessity, and poor means; it was a burden which seemed more than life could bear. Even the Lord's words of encouragement, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door," appeared to bring with them a special aggravation. The prospects of service were unusually attractive; so much could be done if there were only the strength to do it. Former prayers were answered; the longed-for opportunity had come; men were eager for the gospel; the way to preach was lying open; Christ Himself was calling, and at this critical

hour there was paralysing inability. This last feature of the description lends a peculiar pathos to the message. It must have been hard for the church to rid itself of the sense of sin in that it was doing, could do so little. The faculty of spiritual self-tormenting, so subtle, in many persons so deep-seated, thrives in sorrowful experiences like this. The Lord's message supplies the comfort the church is in need of; corrects the error of its self-judgment. The whole meaning of the message is that to bear quietly may be as Divine a call as to hope largely, or to be enthusiastic in resolve. There is a discipline of disappointment, and that discipline must be borne. We are trained for future usefulness through pains and self-questionings, and the endurance of insufficiency. In all the clauses of this message we can read the endeavour to put heart into Philadelphia; the Lord gives Himself to awaken and sustain the self-respect of His troubled people. At first sight the images appear to lack tenderness; that is only because the tenderness is veiled in images of strength. A striking illustration of this feature of the message is in the title given to the Lord with which it opens, "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth." The peculiar affliction of Philadelphia was the occurrence of favourable opportunities for doing Christ's work just when the church was at the far end of its possibilities. And the Lord says, "I know all about that." It is one of the ironies of life that the occasion we have longed for, and in our enthusiasm ceaselessly but fruitlessly tried to make for ourselves, may come with no effort of ours at the very time we can do nothing. This, says the Lord of Truth, is no mockery of fate; it is of the Divine appointment. "I have set before thee a door opened, and it shall continue open until you are able to enter in. You will enter in sooner than you think, and when your moment of invigoration comes, your strength will not be wasted in efforts to make the conditions favourable; you shall enter at once where I have prepared the way." Even in our times of waiting, we can often do a little; and all that little tells if the Lord has been beforehand with us. There is recognition, moreover, in the message, honourable recognition, of the actual achievement of the church. The faith had been kept; Christ's name had not been denied. Philadelphia ranks with Pergamum, the martyr-church. And then there is promised to Philadelphia a public vindication of its fidelity, a vindication to which even its enemies shall bear hearty witness, "Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." They who had mocked the patience of the church in its affliction will not be able to withhold their admiration; they are drawn out of reluctant into willing acknowledgment that God had loved His suffering people. Thus does Christ encourage the patient church. As there is no trial harder than that of prolonged inactivity and wasting strength, so none has consolations loftier and more direct. The way of access to God is intended to lie all open to those so sorely tried. The Divine approval is set over against accusations of self, the taunts of the ungodly, and the ironies of life. And out of this should come a steadfastness holding fast to the end. A twofold reward is promised to Philadelphia; there is a promise for time, there is also a promise for eternity; and each is set before us as the direct result of the sore discipline through which the church has had to pass, according to those far-reaching words of James, the Lord's brother, "Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." (1) There is the temporal promise. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee," &c. This church shall emerge from the general tribulation, having lost nothing of her virtue, with her sense of the Divine protection confirmed and justified. When the shews of things are passing away, and the strong-seeming are as children, the tried shall prove the trusty. (2) There is also an eternal reward; and, as in some other of these messages, the eternal reward is not simply a personal blessedness, it is the high honour of being of service in the kingdom of God. "He that overcometh, I will make him," &c. There is in this image a note of personal consideration, of that tenderness, veiled in strength, which marks the whole message. Just as the Lord draws from the enmity of the Jews occasion to assure Philadelphia that the most gracious promises made to Israel are hers, so He introduces a touch of local colour which reveals sympathy. The city of Philadelphia was exposed to earthquakes; its geological formation was of lava, with trap-dykes intervening, and earthquakes were common occurrences in the people's experience. "The walls were not to be trusted, but every day some mischance made them tremble and gape. The inhabitants were on the constant

look-out for faults in the ground, and were always attending to their buildings." The image of an unshaken pillar would have a special meaning for men with such an experience; and the Church was to be such a pillar. Not only was there prepared for them a city of sure foundations; they were to be among the foundations. This was the destiny for which their discipline had fitted them; this was their reward. But the promise goes further; it is an inscribed pillar which is presented to our view. "I will write upon him the name of my God," &c. Patience is the substruction of the godly character; on it may be reached all the graces of the heavenly life. It is a manly virtue, and needs but the touch of Christ's finger to be transformed into a Divine grace. It is a social virtue, conspicuously commemorated in the city of God. It is an onward-looking virtue; our "forward movements" are founded on it; it has promise of the future, "I will write on him My new name." (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The address to Philadelphia*:—I. THE INTRODUCTION. Philadelphia was a city not far from Sardis, founded by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamos, a few centuries before the Christian era. Its situation was upon the side of a mountain, which had a commanding view of a fertile and extensive country. It was a place of considerable importance in the time of the apostles. It is still populous, but in a mean condition. The character which Christ assumes to this church is, "He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." It was needful that the church in Philadelphia should know that He was "the Holy One," and consequently that a low degree of piety was not sufficient in His esteem. It was further needful to remember, that He was "the True One," that is, "the Truth," or the God of Truth, and consequently that sincerity of motive was required, as well as purity of conduct. Truth and holiness are inseparably allied. Every deviation from rectitude is a lie. The more specific aspect in which Christ appears before the church in Philadelphia is, "He that hath the key of David," &c. This alludes to part of the representation of His person in the first chapter. The imagery, however, is more extended in its present application, and has a more extensive signification. He now represents Himself as having the key of the kingdom of heaven, upon the earth as well as in the invisible state. II. THE DECLARATION. "I know thy works." This is the usual commencement of these addresses. The declaration is, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The Christians in Philadelphia are comforted with the assurance that the design of their enemies would not be permitted to succeed; that their cause would survive; and that many from that city would continue to enter into the Redeemer's fold. That there are certain places and seasons in which the way is open for the spread of gospel truth, and others in which it is closed, the history of the church and daily observation and experience abundantly prove. Nor is it less evident that this depends not upon any peculiarity of circumstances in relation either to the church or to the world, but to causes uncontrollable by human agency and design. As a general rule, indeed, where means are most used, and the prayers of the churches are most directed, the door is eventually thrown open; but occasionally all such efforts become ineffectual, and a door unexpectedly and unsolicited is opened in another direction. Sometimes a wide door is suddenly closed, and at other times a narrow door is opened wide. The prosperity which attends the preaching of the word in some places, and the discouragement in others, are not to be attributed to the different gifts and graces of men, so much as to the sovereign pleasure of Him who has the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Usefulness often depends upon a wise and prayerful observation of times and seasons, as much as upon actual labour. Many have succeeded by a readiness to discern and avail themselves of an opened door; and many, with greater energy and zeal, have failed, from striving to keep open a door which He has closed. III. THE COMMENDATION. "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." The strength of this church was small, but it was strength of the right kind. The strength of a church does not consist in worldly wealth, or wisdom, or power, but in its fidelity to the word and profession of the name of Christ. This strength is termed "little," not with an intention to censure, so much as to show what a little strength of this kind can effect against the united powers of earth and hell, and how greatly a little of such strength is prized by "Him that is holy and true." Nevertheless, it may be designed by this epithet to teach us, that even such strength, under such circumstances, is small in comparison of that which from the full exercise of faith and prayer might and ought to be attained. IV. THE

THREATENING. This is addressed, through the church, to a party which professed to be the true church, and the only objects of Divine favour. "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not," &c. The Jews, here referred to, opposed Judaism to Christianity. The name of Jew was far greater, in their esteem, than that of Christian. V. **THE PROMISE.** This is to the whole church, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience," &c. VI. **THE ADMONITION.** "Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." VII. **THE APPLICATION.** A pillar is a needful as well as an ornamental part of a spacious building. It was so in the Jewish temple. It is the symbol therefore of a secure and prominent place in the temple of the new Jerusalem. It is not improbable that names were given to the pillars of the temple, and inscribed upon them. In 1 Kings vii. we are told, that when Solomon set up the two main pillars of the porch, he called the name of one Jachin, and the other Boaz, both of which chiefly denoted stability. (*G. Rogers.*) *The words of Christ to the congregation at Philadelphia:—*I. **A CHARACTER TO BE ADORED.** 1. Holy. 2. True. 3. Supreme. All the doors to human usefulness, dignity, and happiness, are at the disposal of Christ. II. **AN ENERGY TO BE COVETED.** 1. The energy of true usefulness. 2. The energy of loyal obedience. 3. The energy of true courage. 4. The energy of moral sovereignty. 5. The energy of Divine approval and protection. III. **A DESTINY TO BE SOUGHT.** 1. A crown lies within their reach. 2. Divine security is assured. 3. Sublime distinction is promised. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The church small in its temporal resources, but great in its fidelity to the name of Christ:—*I. **THIS CHURCH WAS SMALL IN SIZE, AND POOR IN ITS TEMPORAL RESOURCES.** 1. Its numerical power was small. 2. Its social power was small. 3. Its financial power was small. II. **THIS CHURCH WAS FAITHFUL TO THE WORD AND NAME OF CHRIST.** III. **THIS CHURCH HAD OPENED TO IT MANY OPPORTUNITIES OF EXTENDED USEFULNESS.** These openings are:—1. Providential. 2. Welcome. 3. Progressive and useful. 4. Largely dependent upon the moral condition of the church. IV. **THIS CHURCH WOULD BE HONOURED BY THE SUBJUGATION OF ITS ENEMIES, AND BY A TRUE RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE LOVE CONCERNING IT.** V. **THIS CHURCH WAS TO BE FAVOURED WITH THE KINDLY GUARDIANSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL.** 1. Times of trial will come upon the church. (1) The extent of the trial. (2) The time of the trial. (3) The design of the trial. 2. In times of trial to the church, faithful souls shall be favoured with the Divine guardianship. (1) This safety is Divinely promised. (2) This safety is a recompense. (3) This safety is welcome. 3. That a church may be poor in its temporal circumstances, and yet faithful to Christ. 4. That a church may be poor in its temporal circumstances, and yet vigorous in Christian enterprise. 5. That a church, poor in its temporal circumstances, but rich in faith, will experience the guardian care of Heaven. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *True moral strength:—*I. **ITS CONNECTION WITH CHRIST.** 1. Christ recognises it. 2. Christ honours it. 3. Christ imparts it. Power over—(1) Circumstances. (2) Society. (3) Temptation. II. **ITS INFLUENCE OVER ERROR** (ver. 9). The general idea is, that false religion shall pay homage to the moral power of Christians. How is this done? The moral power of Christianity comes in contact with corrupt human nature in three forms:—1. As a morality. It is a regulated system, and its laws commend themselves both to man's natural love of his own rights, and his natural love of his own interests. 2. As an institution. The mind must have worship, must have a dietary and a ritual of devotion. Christianity, as an institution, appeals to that. 3. As a theology. It is a system of belief, and thus appeals to man's craving after truth. III. **ITS FUTURE REWARD.** 1. Preservation. 2. Visitation. 3. Exaltation. (1) Stability. (2) Utility. (3) Divinity. (*Caleb Morris.*) *He that hath the key of David.—The key of David:—*The reference here is to Isa. xxii. 22: "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." This was said of Eliakim, who was thus set up as a type of a greater than himself—a greater than David. Eliakim was royal chamberlain, keeper of the house, like Joseph in Pharaoh's palace. So Christ is represented as not only being the royal possessor of the house, but He also to whom the keeping of its gate was entrusted. I. **THE KEY OF DAVID'S HOUSE.** The palace is His, and He keeps the key of it, as the Father has given it to Him. He opens and shuts according as He will. II. **THE KEY OF DAVID'S CASTLE.** Besides his palace David had a fort on Zion, which he took from the Jebusites—a stronghold against the enemy. So has our David a strong tower and fortress, into which we run and are safe. III. **THE KEY OF DAVID'S CITY.** Yes, the key of Jerusalem, both the earthly and the heavenly. IV. **THE KEY OF**

DAVID'S TREASURE-HOUSE. That storehouse contains all we need. The unsearchable riches are here. V. THE KEY OF DAVID'S BANQUETING-HOUSE. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Opened doors* :—I. CHRIST IS THE PROVIDENCE OF OUR LIVES. What we call chances are not chances. The opportunities that come to us are God-given opportunities. The doors that open before us He flings wide open. The doors that are shut He bars and bolts. II. IT IS OURS TO SEE THE OPEN DOOR AND ENTER IN THEREAT. There is a certain significance in the very word "Philadelphia," lover of man. This is a true designation of those that are pre-eminently workers among their fellow men, the type represented in this Epistle. He is one who sees the door that God opens, takes the key which God hands to him, enters in at the door, and takes charge of that which God has put before him. Such an one must have two qualities: power to perceive the opportunity, and the courage to avail himself of it; and these two qualities make what we call in secular forces genius. They are the foundation of the great successes of life. III. OUR EPISTLE ADDS A COMFORTING WORD, A WORD OF PROMISE. "He shall be a pillar," &c. Observe that this promise is a promise, not to the great prophets, not to the men of transcendent spiritual genius, but to the faithful Christian workers, to men who love their fellow men. 1. They that thus gave themselves to God's service shall become pillars in God's Church. The reward which God gives for service is more service. What Christ says here to every man is this: If you will watch for your opportunity of service, and if you will be faithful in that service, though you have but little strength and are yourself of small account, you shall be a pillar in the temple of my God, you shall be the stay and strength of men less strong than you, you shall support the Church of Christ by your faith, here and hereafter. 2. They "shall go no more out." I think, for the most part, that in this life, we in the Church flow as the drops of water flow that are on the very edge of the Gulf Stream. They are brought in perpetual contact with the greater waters of the Atlantic Ocean, and by the waves and currents flowing back and forth. Now they are without, and now they are within. A few sainted souls flow, as it were, in the very centre of the Gulf Stream, and know not the cold of the battling waves without. But, for the most part, we are half in the world and half out of it, and count ourselves almost saints if we are out of the world half the time. Now, Christ says this: not to the man of prayers and visions and special experience and the monastic life, but to him who will seize the opportunity for work, and with fidelity pursue it; he shall more and more find himself taken out from all contamination and evil life, he shall find himself more and more following in a current pure and healthful, until, when the end shall come, he shall go no more out for ever. 3. "And on him I will write a new name—the name of my God, the name of the New Jerusalem, my new name." How is it that God writes names in human lives? A child is plucked out of the street and taken into a Christian family, and the father adopts him as his own, and gives him his own name; and in the nursery, in the school, in the business, in the household, in all the relations of life, father and mother are writing their own name in the life of their adopted child. And so the city of the New Jerusalem writes in the heart of every man who comes into allegiance to the kingdom of Christ a new name—the name of the kingdom of Christ. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) *God opens doors* :—As one who sails along the Atlantic coast, exploring, comes to an indentation in the coast, and sets his sails toward it, and finds there is no opening there, and then, pushing out to sea again, sails along a little further, and comes to a second and a third, and at last reaches the Narrows, and pushes in between Staten Island and Bay Ridge, and enters the great bay, and sees the majestic waters of the Hudson River pouring down—as such an one has entered the door which God opened for all future commerce to go back and forth upon, so we sail in life, seeking our opportunity looking here, looking there, and coming at last to an open door. We call it a good chance; but God has made it for us, and it is of His purpose that we have found it. He sets before us our open doors. (*Ibid.*) *An open door for little strength* :—"Thou hast a little strength." The words do not mean that the persecution had been so oppressive as well nigh to exhaust the church, so that it had only a little strength remaining. Rather they describe the condition of the church before the terrible trial came upon it. From the very beginning its ability had been but small. Yet small as its strength was, its members had stood firm in the face of cruel threatenings and alluring promises. And lo! as the reward of their steadfastness, the Lord declares that He has set before them "an open door" which no man could shut. That is to say, through the gateway of their fidelity, feeble as they were, they went under the leadership of Christ to a sphere of useful-

ness, which was peculiarly their own, and which no mortal could prevent them from filling. "Thou hast but little strength." How many in all our congregations may be truly thus addressed? Now, I know few passages of Scripture more encouraging than this. For one thing it suggests to us that the having of but little strength is not a matter of which we need to be ashamed. If one has brought it upon himself by his own iniquity, then it may be a matter of disgrace; but if it come in the allotment of God's providence, there is no moral reproach to be associated with it. Christ did not overlook the Church of Philadelphia, weak though it was. Is it not written, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench"? "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." The having of but a little strength may even come to be, in some respects, an advantage. For it is not a little remarkable that the two churches which received unqualified condemnation are those of Smyrna and Philadelphia, neither of which was strong; while on the other hand the severest reproof is addressed to the church of Laodicea, which any outsider would have spoken of as at once prosperous and influential. Thus we are reminded that where there is much strength there is also a disposition to trust in that; while, on the other hand, where there is conscious feebleness there is felt also the necessity of making application for the might of the Most High. But pursuing this line of thought a little farther we may see from my text that the having of only a little strength does not utterly disqualify us from serving the Lord. Feeble as they were, the Philadelphians had kept Christ's word, and had not denied His name. They kept their loyalty to Him even in their weakness. And it is possible for every one of us to do the same. If my strength is small, God does not require of me that which only a larger measure of power could enable me to perform. Wherever I am, it is enough if there I keep His word; and however limited be my resources, He asks no more than that I use all these resources in advancing the honour of His name. Still further, if we proceed upon this principle, my text affirms that a wider sphere will be ultimately opened up to us. Fidelity always rises. It is, in fact, irrepressible; for when Christ says to it, "Come up higher," no one can hold it down. I. WE MAY LEARN THAT USEFULNESS IS NOT THE PRIMARY OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTENTION. Not what we can do for others, but rather what we are in ourselves, demands our first attention, for to do good to others we must first be good ourselves. Usefulness is to character what fragrance is to the flower. But the gardener does not make the fragrance his first or greatest aim. Nay, rather his grand design is to produce a perfect flower, for he knows if he succeed in that, the fragrance will come of itself. In the same way the Christian's first concern should be with his own character. To be holy is our primary duty, and through that we pass to usefulness. II. But if these things are so, we have, as another inference suggested from this text, AN EASY EXPLANATION OF THE GREAT USEFULNESS OF MANY WHO ARE IN NO WISE NOTEWORTHY FOR STRENGTH. Few things are more commonly spoken of among men than the fact that the most successful soul-winners in the ministry are not always those who are most conspicuous for intellectual ability or argumentative power. In the same way you will sometimes find a church whose members are poor in this world's goods, and not remarkable for that culture which modern circles have so largely deified, yet famous for its good works among the masses; and when you look into the matter you find the explanation in the consecrated characters and lives of those who are associated in its fellowship. They have sought their usefulness through their holiness, and not their holiness through their usefulness; and therefore it is they have had such signal triumphs. III. Finally, if the principles which I have tried to deduce from this text are true, we SEE AT ONCE HOW SUCH APPARENTLY OPPOSITE THINGS AS CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT AND CHRISTIAN AMBITION ARE TO BE PERFECTLY HARMONIZED. The full discharge of duty on the lower level, opens the passage up into the higher. We see that illustrated in secular departments every day. If the schoolboy wishes to gain a high position as a man, he must be content, as long as he is at school, to go through its daily round, and perform in the best possible manner its common duties. The better he is as a scholar, the more surely will the door into eminence open for him as a man. But if he trifle away his time, if he despise what he calls the "drudgery" of education, and so leave school without having learned those things which he was sent thither to acquire, then there will be nothing for him in after life but humiliation and failure. Doors may open to him, but he will never be ready to enter one of them. Fretting over our weakness will not make things better, but it will prevent us from bringing anything out of the

little strength we have. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The open and shut door* :—Doors are of many kinds. Everything has its door leading into its own reserves, by which easy entrance is furnished, but, apart from which, they are inaccessible. Some ways of entrance are very narrow and restricted, others are relatively wide and open. We have each our door by which we are accessible, and also doors through which we have access to others. Human reason finds a wide door, but human sympathy and love a wider and deeper. What a door, then, Wisdom has, who is the maker and mother of us all. 1. But, though her children, we MAKE OUR BEGINNING OUTSIDE THE DOOR OF ALL THINGS. We are born without the gate, laid very humbly at the door. We make our beginning in unconscious weakness. "Behold," says the Father, "I have set before thee an open door, which no man can shut." This is the birthright of our childhood. God with His universe stands at the gate of His child in the joy of expectation, waiting for the awaking of his intelligence to declare to him his blessedness of Being, and the greatness of his inheritance. "Blessed is he that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door." But, to descend to particulars, we may ask, to what is there not, at the first, an open door set before us? Only by ignorance, folly, and abuse, the door of our physical inheritance is closed against us. God's creatures are commissioned to befriend His children. To more than a sufficiency of worldly goods there is at first an open door. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich, but he that dealeth with a slack hand becometh poor." No less is there a fellowship of mind which seeks to awaken our observation and inquiry, and minister to our knowledge. And the door of communication with the fountain-sources of all light and power of mind is ever widening. Earth draws nearer to and more partakes of heaven, and heaven has more of earth as generation after generation is "taken up." But to what a social inheritance is there not an open door? We are born into families. If as youths we go forth from our first homes, it is only that we may be prepared as men to enter upon our own homes. But other worlds than earth, and higher life than is possible under nature is open to us, through the door that is set before us. The earth is neither prison-house, palace, nor true home for man. It is not an end, only a way, a marvellous thoroughfare to the Spiritual, the Infinite, and the Eternal. God has not opened up to us the kingdom of nature for our culture by means of our senses, and the kingdom of mind for the culture of thought, affection, and will, by the exercise of our souls, and kept His own door closed against us as His children. He has not doomed us to perish in the earth, much less appointed us to wrath, but to "inherit all things," and "live together with Him." II. HE WHO MADE US AND LAID US AT THE OPEN DOOR HAS ANTICIPATED OUR PRAYER, AND MADE HIMSELF THE WAY OF ACCESS AND THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE. We are too accustomed to think of Christ merely as the door of mercy for our souls, but not of health for our bodies; as the door to heaven when we are dismissed from earth, but not the door to all earthly treasures; as the door of access to God, but not the door of access to men. We forget that His kingdom is an universal kingdom, and His dominion everlasting; that He exercises no divided sovereignty; that He made all things and gave them the laws of their several existence. He is also the light of all our seeing. "If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light." And if we follow the light, we shall be led into all the ways of that hidden wisdom by which all things have been constituted and are kept in being. Having His spirit we stand in kindred relation to all things and all being; our minds possess a fellowship of nature with all thought in its impersonal diffusion and in its personal centres; our hearts are moved by a sympathy with the attractions, affinities, instincts, and personal affections which proclaim the drawing together of all things; whilst in our deepest nature is awakened a sense of our Divine childhood, which seeks and finds access to God. III. But He who is the door to all things, and also the way to Himself, does not leave us to ourselves to find the door, BUT OFFERS HIMSELF AS OUR GUIDE, TO LEAD US NOT ONLY INTO HIS HOUSE, BUT ALSO TO CONDUCT US TO THE FEAST HIS WISDOM AND LOVE HAVE PREPARED. He stands at the door and knocks for admission. He offers Himself for our acceptance. IV. He who so graciously offers to be our guide that He may lead us into our inheritance, ALSO WARNS US, LEST SLIGHTING THE OPPORTUNITY OF OUR DAY we should come to reject His aid, despise our birthright, and not "knowing the time of our visitation," "the things which belong to our peace should be for ever hidden from our eyes," and the door set open before us should be for ever closed against us. (*W. Pulsford, D.D.*) Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied

My name.—*Commendation for the steadfast*:—The Philadelphian church was not great, but it was good; not powerful, but faithful. The Philadelphian saints, like the limpet, which has but little strength, stuck firmly to the rock, and they are commended for it. They had little strength, but they kept God's word, and they did not deny His name. I. A WORD OF PRAISE. I do not think that we should be so slow in praising one another. There is a general theory abroad that it is quite right to point out to a brother all his imperfections, for it will be a salutary medicine to him, and prevent his being too happy in this vale of tears. Is it supposed that we shall cheer him on to do better by always finding fault with him? What had these Philadelphian believers done that they should be praised? "Thou hast kept My word, and thou hast not denied My name." What does this mean? 1. Does it not mean, first, that they had received the word of God; for if they had not heard it and held it they could not have kept it. It was theirs; they read it and searched it and made it their own. It is no small privilege so to be taught of the Holy Ghost as to have a taste for the gospel, a deep attachment to the truths of the covenant. 2. Next, we may be sure that they loved the word of God. They had an intense delight in it. They appreciated it. They stored it up as bees store away honey, and they were as ready to defend it as bees are to guard their stores. They meditated upon it; they sought to understand it. More, however, is meant than simply loving the word, though that is no small thing. 3. It means that they believed it, believed it most thoroughly, and so kept it. I am afraid that there are great truths in God's word which we do not intelligently believe, but take for granted. 4. Furthermore, in addition to the inner possession and the hearty belief of the truth, we must be ready to adhere to it at all times. That, perhaps, is the central thought here—"Thou hast kept My word." 5. No doubt, also, it was intended in this sense—that they had obeyed the word of God. II. A WORD OF PROSPECT. "You have been faithful, therefore I will use you. You have been steadfast, therefore I will employ you." For a considerable period of human life, it may be, God does not give to all of us a field of usefulness. There are some to whom He early opens the gate of usefulness, because He sees in them a spirit that will bear the temptation of success; but in many other cases it is questionable whether they could bear promotion, and therefore the Lord permits them to be tried in different ways until He sees that they are found faithful, and then He puts them into His service, and gives them an opportunity of bearing witness for Him. You have been a receiver yourself until now, and that is well and good; but, now that you have become filled, overflow to others, and let them receive of your joy. "How do I know that they will accept it?" say you. I know it from this fact—that, as a general rule, the man that keeps God's word has an open door before him. Gird up your loins and enter it. Rush to the front. Victory lies before you. God means to use you. The hour needs its man quite as much as the man needs the hour. The Lord help you to keep His word, and then to go in for public testimony. III. A WORD OF PROMISE. Those who keep God's word shall themselves be kept from temptation. The Lord returns into His servants' bosoms that which they render to Him: He gives keeping for keeping. This is the Lord's way of delivering those who keep His word: He shuts them away from the temptation that comes upon others. He seems to say, "Dear child, since you will not go beyond my written word, you shall not be tempted to go beyond it. I will cause the enemies of truth to leave you alone. You shall be offensive to them, or they to you, and you shall soon part company." Or perhaps the text may mean that if the temptation shall come you shall be preserved from it. The deliberately formed conviction that the word of God is the standard of our faith, and the unwavering habit of referring everything to it, may not deliver us from every error, but they will save us from that which is the nurse of every error—that is, the habit of trusting to our own understanding, or relying upon the understandings of our fellow-men. I value more a solid confidence in the word of God than even the knowledge that comes out of it; for that faith is a saving habit, a sanctifying habit, in every way a strengthening and confirming and preserving habit. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *God's Word in safe custody*:—I. THEY KEPT HIS WORD. God's word, and not the traditions or commandments of men, is the only strength of the Church, and the only source of all true religion. By us, too, this word must be kept. 1. Intellectually. It is not a cunningly-devised fable, but the living word of the everlasting God, who cannot lie. 2. Affectionately. In religion we want not only glass windows that let in the light, but human hearts that are filled with love. 3. Practically. It has been

well said "that the life of a Christian is the best picture of the life of Christ."

II. THEY HAD NOT DENIED HIS NAME. 1. Infidelity denies Christ's name. 2. Worldly-mindedness is a denial of Christ's name. 3. Religious formality is a denial of Christ's name. 4. Neglect of religious ordinances is also a practical denial of Christ. (W. G. Barrett.)

Perseverance in weakness.—I. THERE ARE MANY THINGS WHICH RENDER US FAINT AND WEARY, sadly conscious of our little strength. 1. The power and force of temptation, the thought that I, the creature of a day, with a nature prone to sin, and pitted, before God and His angels, against Satan and the legions of evil. Oh, Christian, if at any moment the spirit of evil tempts thee, and thou art about to give way, bethink thee of the church of Philadelphia, having a little strength, yet keeping the word of her Lord's patience, and not denying His name. Faint, yet pursuing! Let this be thy watchword in the fight. Rest not until the enemy has fled. 2. The Philadelphian church had kept the word of Her Lord's patience. Affliction is very apt to exhaust the Christian's little strength, so that he should lose patience and begin to doubt. 3. Another cause of discouragement is the coldness and unbelief of other Christians. 4. And then comes that which is so trying to all, to those who have escaped the above-mentioned temptations, to those even who have made great progress in the spiritual life—the sameness of religion. Over and over again the same work has to be done. We wanted to be quit of some, at least, of these old and troublesome tenants; but there they are still. We hoped to go on unto perfection, higher yet; and here we are still in the valleys, doing most undignified work, quite unworthy of our long experience and knowledge. It is very humiliating. But it is also uninteresting, and the want of interest discourages. II. WHAT ARE THE REMEDIES FOR THIS DISCOURAGEMENT? 1. First, we may search out the promises of God made to His people in Holy Scripture, and therefore made to us. With this we may combine attentive meditation upon the person and character of the Lord Jesus. Most especially remarkable is His tenderness for the weak. 2. Then we must speak of the means of grace, prayer, reading God's holy word, &c. 3. There is one thing which we must especially guard against, that is, impatience. We must not expect an immediate and perfect cure of all our spiritual weakness. We cannot, by any process, make one step between earth and heaven. Is it nothing to hold fast that we have? By and by He will come and relieve us. (W. Mitchell, M.A.) I will make them of the synagogue of Satan . . . come and worship before thy feet.—*Subjugation of the enemies of the gospel*.—I. THE DEBASEMENT OF THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST AND OF HIS PEOPLE FORETOLD. Haughty, presuming, and persecuting characters must be brought down. They shall one day be compelled to do honour to those whom they have ignorantly despised and cruelly tormented. They shall be irresistibly convinced that the objects of their cruel hatred were the objects of the infinite love of the Almighty Redeemer. Jesus can easily conquer His most potent adversaries and protect His weakest friends. II. THE DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGE OF REAL CHRISTIANS SHALL BE PERCEIVED BY THE AGENTS OF SATAN. "They shall know that I have loved thee." This is to know, that they are the most highly honoured, that they are inviolably secure, and that they shall be eternally blessed. To be loved by the adorable Immanuel is to be raised to the summit of honour, and to be interested in a source of never-failing felicity. The love of Jesus Christ to His people is the source of all their consolation in time, and the basis of all their hopes for immortality. III. THE REDEEMER'S APPROBATION OF THE PHILADELPHIAN CHURCH. "Thou hast kept the word of my patience." 1. The doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ is fitly called the word of His patience, because it describes His persevering patience under the cruel persecutions of ungodly men—the fiery temptations of Satan. The patience of our blessed Lord in bearing, and in forbearing, is most amazing. 2. The commendation expressed in the text may refer to the patience which the Philadelphians had exercised in keeping the word of Christ whilst they had been enduring reproaches, and temptations, and afflictions. It requires more than an ordinary degree of patience to keep the word of the Redeemer when we are called to suffer for its sake. The stronger is our faith, the more lively is our hope, and the more lively is our hope, the more steady is our patience in waiting for promised blessings. Patience is the grace that preserves the tried and tempted Christian from yielding to despondency: it keeps his mind peaceful in the storms of adversity by counteracting the baneful influence of pride and unbelief in the heart, which tend to produce discontent and impatience under trying and distressing circumstances. Nothing more recommends the religion of Jesus Christ than the exercise of the grace of patience under severe trials

and cruel reproaches. IV. THE PROMISE BY WHICH OUR LORD ENCOURAGED THE PHILADELPHIANS. "I also will keep thee," &c. The Lord foresees all the seasons of persecution which His servants will experience upon earth. (*J. Hyatt*.) Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, therefore will I keep thee from the hour of temptation.—*The happiness of being kept from the hour of temptation* :—As deliverance out of temptation is undoubtedly one of the greatest mercies that God vouchsafes His people in this world, so there is nothing that more enhances the greatness of the mercy than the critical time of God's vouchsafing it. As in the vicissitudes of night and day, the darkness of one recommends the returns of the other, adding a kind of lustre even to light itself, so it is the hour of danger which sets a price and value upon the hour of deliverance, and makes it more properly in season. I. THERE IS A CERTAIN PROPER SEASON, OR HOUR, WHICH GIVES A PECULIAR FORCE, STRENGTH, AND EFFICACY TO TEMPTATION. Every fit of a burning fever is not equally dangerous to the sick person; nor are all hours during the distemper equally fatal. There is a proper time, sometimes called in scripture "the day of temptation" (Psa. xcv. 8); sometimes "the evil day" (Eph. vi. 13); and sometimes "the hour of temptation." A time in which temptation is infinitely more fierce and daring, more urgent and impetuous, than at other times. II. BY WHAT MEANS, HELPS, AND ADVANTAGES, A TEMPTATION ATTAINS ITS PROPER SEASON OR HOUR. 1. For that which is most remote, but yet the very source of all the mischief which the devil either does or can do to the souls of men; namely, that original, universal corruption of man's nature, containing in it the seeds and first principles of all sins whatsoever, and more or less disposing a man to the commission of them. For it is this which administers the first materials for the tempter to work upon, and without which it is certain that he could do nothing. 2. The next advantage is from that particular corruption, or sort of sin, which a man is most peculiarly prone and inclined to. 3. A third advantage towards the prevailing hour of a temptation, is the continual offer of alluring objects and occasions extremely agreeable to a man's particular corruption. 4. The fourth advantage, or furtherance towards the maturity or prevalent season of a temptation: which is the unspeakable malice and activity, together with the incredible skill and boldness of the tempter. 5. Over and above all this, God sometimes, in his wise providence and just judgment, commissions this implacable spirit to tempt at a rate more than ordinary. And this must needs be a further advantage towards the ripening of a temptation than any of the former. 6. A sixth advantage, by which a temptation approaches to its crisis or proper hour, is a previous, growing familiarity of the mind with the sin which a man is tempted to; whereby he comes to think of it with still lesser and lesser abhorrences, than formerly he was wont to do. 7. There is yet another way by which a temptation arrives to its highest pitch or proper hour; and that is by a long train of gradual, imperceptible encroachments of the flesh upon the spirit. III. SOME SIGNS, MARKS, AND DIAGNOSTICS, WHEREBY WE MAY DISCERN WHEN A TEMPTATION HAS ATTAINED ITS PROPER SEASON OR HOUR. 1. When there is a strange, peculiar, and more than usual juncture and concurrence of all circumstances and opportunities for the commission of any sin, that especially which a man is most inclined to; then, no doubt, is the hour of temptation. 2. A second sign of a temptation's drawing near its hour is a strange averseness to duty, and a backwardness to, if not a neglect of, the spiritual exercises of prayer, reading, and meditation. Now as every principle of life has some suitable aliment or provision, by which both its being is continued and its strength supported: so the forementioned duties are the real proper nutriment by which the spiritual life is kept up and maintained in the vigorous exercise of its vital powers. 3. The third sign that I shall mention of a temptation's attaining its full hour or maturity, is a more than usual restlessness and importunity in its enticings or instigations. For it is the tempter's last assault, and therefore will certainly be furious; the last pass which he makes at the soul, and therefore will be sure to be driven home. Inferences: 1. That every time in which a man is tempted is not properly the hour of temptation. 2. That every man living, some time or other, sooner or later, shall assuredly meet with an hour of temptation; a certain critical hour, which shall more especially try what mettle his heart is made of, and in which the eternal concerns of his soul shall more particularly lie at stake. 3. That the surest way to carry us safe and successful through this great and searching hour of probation, is a strict, steady, conscientious living up to the rules of our religion, which the text here calls a "keeping the word of Christ's patience;" a denomination given to the gospel, from that peculiar distinguishing grace which the great author of the gospel was pleased to signalise it

for, above all other religions and institutions in the world, and that both by his precept and example. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Keeping and kept*:—We are not to suppose that these good souls in Philadelphia lived angelic lives of unbroken holiness because Jesus Christ has nothing but praise for them. Rather we are to learn the great thought that, in all our poor, stained service, He recognises the central motive and main drift, and, accepting these, is glad when He can commend.

I. THE THING KEPT. This expression, “the word of My patience,” refers, not to individual commandments to patience, but to the entire gospel message to men. What does the New Testament mean by “patience”? Not merely endurance, although, of course, that is included, but endurance of such a sort as will secure persistence in work, in spite of all the opposition and sufferings which may come in the way. The man who will reach his hand through the smoke of hell to lay hold of plain duty is the patient man of the New Testament.

II. THE KEEPERS OF THIS WORD. The metaphor represents to us the action of one who, possessing some valuable thing, puts it into some safe place, takes great care of it, and watches tenderly and jealously over it. So “thou hast kept the word of My patience.” There are two ways by which Christians are to do that; the one is by inwardly cherishing the word, and the other by outwardly obeying it. Let me say a word about each of these two things. I am afraid that the plain practical duty of reading their Bibles is getting to be a much neglected duty amongst professing Christian people. I do not know how you are to keep the word of Christ’s patience in your hearts and minds if you do not read them. There never was, and there never will be, vigorous Christian life unless there be an honest and habitual study of God’s word. The trees whose roots are laved and branches freshened by that river have leaves that never wither, and all their blossoms set. But the word is kept by continual obedience in action as well as by inward treasuring. Obviously the inward must precede the outward. Unless we can say with the Psalmist, “Thy word have I hid in my heart,” we shall not be able to say with him, “I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.”

III. CHRIST KEEPING THE KEEPERS OF HIS WORD. There is a beautiful reciprocity. Christ will do for us as we have done with His word. Christ still does in heaven what He did upon earth. Christ in heaven is as near each trembling heart and feeble foot, to defend and to uphold, as was Christ upon earth. He does not promise to keep us at a distance from temptation, so as that we shall not have to face it, but *from means*, as any that can look at the original will see, that He will “save us *out of it*,” we having previously been in it, so as that “the hour of temptation” shall not be the hour of falling. The lustre of earthly brightnesses will have no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth, and, when set by the side of heavenly gifts, will show black against their radiance, as would electric light between the eye and the sun. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*)

Temptation consolidates character:—When a hard winter sets in, and the earth is covered with a mantle of snow, and each little knot and spray in the hedgerow is encrusted with icicles, vegetation seems to be killed, and every green thing blighted. But it is not so. The genial forces of the earth are driven inward and work deep in her bosom. The snow mantle is doing for her what the fur mantle does for the human frame—concentrating and preserving the vital heat within. So it is in temptation: the time of temptation is a cheerless and dreary hour, when everything seems at a standstill, and the spiritual pulse can no longer be felt, it beats so faintly to the outward touch; but if the will is faithful and true, and the soul patient, the life is really concentrating itself, and rallying its forces within. . . . There have been moderate Christians, there have been shallow Christians, without very much temptation; but there never yet was a saintly Christian, never yet one who pressed to the higher summits of the spiritual life, never one whose banner bore the strange device “Excelsior,” who was not made the victim of manifold temptations. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Times of trial:—Times of general calamity and confusion have ever been productive of the greatest minds. The purest ore is produced from the hottest furnace, and the brightest thunderbolt is elicited from the darkest storm. (*C. Colton.*)

Ver. 11. Behold, I come quickly.—*The coming of Christ*:—It is not improbable that this bishop was no other than the Demetrius who is mentioned in St. John’s third Epistle as having a “good report of all men and of the truth itself,” and if this is the case we have before us a holy man who, probably, was not a very resolute one, and was placed in a position of much difficulty. “Behold, I come quickly.” If our Lord’s words are understood of His second coming, it is obvious to reflect

that the good Bishop of Philadelphia died without witnessing their fulfilment. Nay, he has been in his grave something like eighteen centuries, and our Lord has not yet come to judgment. Man sees only a little distance, and he is impatient, because his outlook is so limited; to him it seems that an event will never arrive, if it has been delayed for some centuries, and so the judgment long apprehended, and also, perhaps, through a series of years long delayed, will not really take place at all, but may at once be classed among the phantoms of a morbid and disordered brain. With God it is altogether otherwise, long and short periods of time do not mean to Him what they mean to us. We see this truth more clearly if we reflect that to us men the passage of time seems slow or rapid, its periods seem long or short according to our varying moods and tempers. When we are suffering acute pain of body or very great anxiety of mind time hangs heavily. We seem to extend the duration of time by the suffering that we compress into its constituent moments. And on the other hand, when we are experiencing great pleasure, whether of mind or body, we become almost or entirely insensible to the flight of time, and from this we may understand how one being, who is the fountain of all goodness, because He is in Himself infinitely blessed, blessed in contemplating His own perfections, blessed in surveying the works which His hands have made, would be, as such, insensible to the impression of time. "Behold, I come quickly." The Bishop of Philadelphia, Demetrius, probably felt that, as far as he was concerned, these words received their fulfilment when, his pastoral labours being completed, he laid himself down to die. In death our Lord comes to each of us, He comes in mercy or in judgment to bring the present state of existence to an end, to open out upon us another. There are two things about death which are full of meaning, and which do not admit of any sort of contradiction. The first is the certainty that it will come to each of us some day, and the second is the utter uncertainty of the day at which it will come. "Behold, I come quickly." The expected coming of Christ throws a flood of light on the various aspects of existence. We are struck, perhaps, with the insignificance of life. Even when man is in possession of all his faculties of mind and body he is often obliged to pass his life in occupations which are at once exacting and mechanical—occupations which make scarcely any demand upon the mind beyond that of attention to the movement of the feet or of the fingers; occupations which might almost or altogether be discharged by machinery, and which, taken by themselves, appear unworthy of a being capable of comprehending truth, capable of growing in the comprehension of it, capable of enjoying a happiness proportionate to his vast desires. "Behold, I come quickly." If Christ's coming means anything, it means the introduction of a life which has no end; it means, for all who will, succession of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The coming of our Lord means that all the wrong-doing and the passions of man which create so much misery will have had their day; it means an entrance, actual or possible, upon a stage of existence in which there will be no sorrow nor crying; it means the exercise of man's higher powers to that fullest extent of their capacity—the beginning of an existence in which thought and heart and will will rest in perfectly ecstatic satisfaction on their one true object, and an existence which will last for ever. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.—Hold fast :—

I. WE ARE ALREADY IN POSSESSION OF A GREAT PROPERTY. "That which thou hast." As Christians, we are not only striving to gain, but also striving to keep "that which we have." That is the gospel, salvation, Christ, and heaven in Him.

II. THE HOLDING FAST OF THAT WHICH WE HAVE. 1. "That which we have" is contemplated more in the light of a trust than of a privilege. 2. Of course, this whole injunction implies the presence of opposition, making this a matter of difficulty. A Christian holding fast against the world, its spirit, and way, is like a man pulling a boat up-stream, when the waters are deep and the current strong. Whether in the boat or on the bank, pulling by a rope, he needs to pull *always*—a strong, steady, constant pull—that is it! He meets a great many people coming down stream; and *they* do not need to pull much—a touch of the helm now and again, and a dip of the oar is all that they need. Sometimes a Christian is discouraged by observing that so many more seem to be going *with* the stream than seem to be going *against* it. He may be in a great measure mistaken in this. Christians sometimes have a feeling of loneliness. It seems as if all the world were against them. "Hold fast!" you are not so solitary as you imagine. III. **THY CROWN.** Every duty has a crown when it is well done, and every affliction patiently borne, and every day well spent, and every year well lived through, a crown which hangs

trembling on its last hour. There is a sense, too, in which one man can take the crown of another in daily life. To put the matter plainly: if any of us shall be blind or heedless before the face of rich opportunity—if we shall hear, without hearing, the Master say, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door,” and if another, listening, catch the Master’s words and enter in, that man “takes our crown.” He is no richer, for the faithfulness that has proved itself here would have proved itself somewhere else, and in some other service; but we are the poorer—we have lost that little crown. And to lose many of these lesser crowns will diminish the lustre, if indeed it do not also affect the security of the great final crown. IV. BEHOLD HE COMES QUICKLY. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Hold that fast which thou hast*:—Those who are overtaken by spiritual bankruptcy and ruin are probably often very much surprised by such a result befalling them. Every one who has ever had spiritual treasures is tempted to think that his spiritual treasure must be secure. Every one who has had a religious reputation is apt to think that such a reputation is abiding. I. THE CAPACITY OF RELIGIOUS FEELING AND EFFORT, LIKE ALL OTHER POWERS OF THE SOUL, DIES OUT FOR WANT OF USE. There is a tendency to believe that because we could once do a thing, or understand a thing, the power or capacity must remain, although for years we have been out of practice. “Oh yes, of course, I can do that; I have done it often.” How frequently you have heard a man say that, and then, after a desperate, pitiful struggle, he has to give it up and admit his failure. A man has been an expert in rowing, or running, or climbing. Mature years are upon him now, but he laughs at the suggestion that his lungs are not still as strong and his arms as muscular as ever. He makes a severe drain some day on his bodily strength, and finds to his surprise and vexation that the nervous force is giving out long ere the day’s work is done. Or we once knew a foreign language. We fancy it must still flow to our tongue as easily as ever. We are suddenly called upon to use it, and are chagrined to find that the words will not come at our bidding. Now, what is true of our physical and of our intellectual nature is quite as profoundly and terribly true of our spiritual nature. There are organs by which we live to God, and these, if they get no exercise, decay. The practice of ten years ago does not secure their existence and activity now. Their present existence depends upon their present use; but once they have declined, all that province of our nature becomes incapable of impression and feeling, just as to the unintellectual man. Shakespeare has no more significance than a daily newspaper. The inner eye loses its faculty of discerning spiritual things; and yet the tongue may go on talking of them as fluently, perhaps even more fluently than ever. Others will very likely detect the change. For if a man attempts to describe what he has never seen, or gives merely the loose recollection of ten or twenty years ago, an intelligent listener will soon find out something amiss. But the man himself thinks it is all as it should be. He knows the expressions about revealed truth as well as before. Perhaps he is even a trifle more orthodox than he was before; but for all that the spiritual faculty may be gone, perhaps for ever. Let us apply some tests to ascertain our spiritual vitality, the keenness of our spiritual vision. Your nature is perhaps active enough on some sides. You are not suffering from intellectual or emotional lethargy. Your wants and desires have multiplied in number; but are they as baptized with the Christian baptism as they were ten years ago? You have acquired means, you have greatly increased your resources; but is there as much of the gold of the kingdom, of the treasure of heaven there? There are wide harvests of the heart waving from carefully sown seed; but are you sure their roots would not be as rottenness, and their blossomings-up as the dust, if the fiery winds of God began to blow across them? In the remote recesses of the soul, in its hidden depths, what response are you making now to spiritual appeals and promptings? Is there a deep under-current of your life setting towards Christ? II. WE ARE NOT AT ALL SO NECESSARY TO GOD, SO ESSENTIAL FOR HIS PURPOSES, AS WE SOMETIMES THINK WE ARE. We can be useful to God, helpful in carrying out His purposes. It is right that the ambition of being a fellow-worker with God should stir a man. One of the grandest features in the character of the Puritans was that they learned thus to regard themselves, unreservedly. We may not use precisely the same phrases, or give exactly the same colour and form to our thinking. It is in some respects better that we should not, but it is as possible now as then to be representatives of God’s cause, fighters for God, enthusiasts, zealots in His behalf; to have our joys and sorrows completely wrapt up with His joys and sorrows. It is as possible and as blessed. But close behind this spiritual attitude lies a subtle temptation. It lurks even in that extreme

doctrine of predestination in which the Puritans found so much support and consolation. When fighting God's battles amid discouragement and failure of hope, against great odds, they comforted themselves with the thought that they were safe in God's hands; that their salvation and ultimate triumph were guaranteed by a Divine decree. This decree was irreversible, they felt and said, and in its absolute certainty they gloried. But you see how dangerous this position may become. So long as we are certain that our heart is beating with God's, our souls yearning for His righteousness, our hands busy about His work, we are right to comfort ourselves with the thought of the Divine decree, and to take for granted that it is in our favour. But the attitude may change, and the old idea remain. We are far too inclined to take for granted that we must be on God's side—that His decree must be in our favour. Do we suppose that God has special favourites—that He is a respecter of persons? What is there in us, apart from His grace, which makes us specially attractive or necessary? The history of Christ's Church is one long tale of gifts forfeited and privileges transferred. The crown is not lost, but with a little alteration it is made to fit another's brow. The talent is not melted down; it becomes another man's. There is no empty space either in the arena of conflict below or in the place of victory and banqueting above.

III. SALVATION AND ULTIMATE REWARD DEPEND ENTIRELY ON FAITHFULNESS TO PRESENT LIGHT AND STEADFASTNESS IN PRESENT DUTY. Our crowns are being shaped by our present efforts and prayers and sacrifices. We are like men moulding in clay. God pours in gold and brings the crowns out in gold. The crowns will be out of proportion to our deserts, yet will bear the impress of our personality. Each of Christ's disciples has something—some attainment, some experience, it does not matter how humble. Whatever be his ultimate salvation and reward, his crown depends on his holding it. You have learnt, perhaps, some rudiment of Christian faith—as, for example, that you cannot keep your own feet when the enemy assails; and you have learnt when you feel your own weakness to cry out to God. Well, that is not much, but it is something. "Hold that fast." You have perhaps got further—acquired some deeper laws of the Christian life. You have found that the soul grows by giving. You have tasted the strange, Christlike sweetness of doing good; the new strength won by bold witness-bearing. "Hold that fast." Or you have found out that, however it may be with others, there are certain assaults of evil which have for you a special danger; certain places and atmospheres peculiarly perilous; a certain set of truths on which your soul must feed. It is much to have found out what these are. "Hold that fast." Don't think it a small thing merely to hold what you have. Don't think it always necessary to be opening your hands and grasping at more, sometimes, in your eagerness, dropping what you were holding. It is well to think and speak of progress, but let your edifying, your building up, be done carefully; see that the new stones lie evenly on the top of the old. Permanence in spiritual things is as important as progress, and a permanence that is essential is sometimes sacrificed to a progress that is not essential. Let us make sure that we are husbanding what we have won. To gather up, to retain, to make use of all the wisdom we have ever got from God; never to fall behind the best epochs of our former spiritual selves—if we do this we shall not fall. (*John F. Ewing, M.A.*)

Soul-tenacity:—I. THE THINGS OF WHICH THE SOUL IS TO BE TENACIOUS. The soul of man is not to be tenacious of riches, of fame, or of the things of this life; these it cannot long retain in its grasp. 1. It must hold fast the truths of the Bible. 2. It must hold fast the reality of the Christian character. 3. It must hold fast the determination of the Christian life. The tenacity of the soul must be brave; it must be meek; it must be wise; it must be prayerful; and it must be hopeful of the end. II. THE REASON WHY THE SOUL SHOULD BE TENACIOUS OF THESE THINGS. 1. Because they are valuable. 2. Because they are threatened by vigilant enemies. 3. Because the advent of Christ is near. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Fair warning:—I. THE POSSESSION IMPLIED. "That which thou hast." 1. If unsaved, still we have—(1) The offer of salvation. (2) The means of grace. (3) The Bible. (4) The commanding voice of conscience. (5) The convictions of the Holy Ghost. (6) The precious, ennobling possibilities of a blood-bought probation. 2. If saved, we have all these, and—(1) Saving faith. (2) The witness of the Spirit. (3) God's approving smile and fellowship. (4) Saintry communion and fellowship. (5) Place among the people of God. (6) Hope of glory. II. THE DUTY URGED. "Hold fast." 1. Do it publicly. 2. Persistently. 3. Fearlessly. 4. Humbly. 5. In faith, and humble reliance upon Jesus Christ. 6. Do it in self-defence. "That no man take thy crown." III. THE MOTIVE PRESENTED. "Behold, I come quickly." 1. The

majesty and power of the person coming. "I." Describe him: (1) His pre-incarnate glory. (2) His humiliation and sacrifice. (3) His mediatorial glory and coming to judgment. 2. The solemnity of the event. "I come." 3. The impressive manner of His approach. "Quickly." 4. The attention the subject demands. "Behold." This great crisis will be sprung upon no man unaware or unwarned. He exhorts, entreats, warns, so that all may be ready to meet Him with joy. (*T. Kelly.*) *Perseverance*:—Those who are sincere Christians ought to be very careful that they hold fast and preserve that which they have. You must by no means abandon the faith and truth which ye once espoused, you must continue in grace and persist in the ways of virtue, through all opposition. A Christian ought to strive and endeavour for final holiness. He must persevere not only in the profession of all Divine truths, but in the performance of all the duties which are enjoined by the Christian religion. I. ON WHAT ACCOUNTS WE ARE OBLIGED TO BE CAREFUL THAT WE PERSEVERE IN TRUTH AND GODLINESS. 1. As to the benefit and advantage of persevering, it were enough to say that this is that which will give us an assurance of the sincerity of our hearts, and of the reality of our holiness. Many men's beginnings are tolerably good, but they grow worse afterwards, and their end is worst of all. Therefore it is the conclusion that must be the trial of men. Next, I will show the advantage of this admirable gift from that portion of Scripture to which my text belongs: "Thou hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name." Now, observe what are the advantages. "Behold, I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan, to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee," *i.e.*, I will make heretics, apostates, and false brethren ashamed: they shall at last be forced to condemn their own hypocrisy and apostasy, and to reverence that sincerity and uprightness which appear in the lives of those holy men whom no temptations could withdraw from their duty, but who in all seasons held fast their integrity. It follows, ver. 10. "Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep," &c. Here is another benefit of perseverance, namely, God keeps those who keep His Word, who continue in it, and forsake not the profession and practice of it. Such persons shall be kept in an hour of temptation, *i.e.*, in a remarkable time of distress. And He adds, "That no man take thy crown": where, according to the different sense of this clause, there is a double reason suggested, that we should not apostatise from the ways of God. If by crown be meant religion itself, then we have reason to hold it fast, because it is a thing of so excellent a nature. It is our crown, our dignity, our glory. Or, we may understand this of the crown of perseverance, and then the sense may be this, Hold that fast which thou hast, continue so steadfast in your religion and in your duty that no man may be able to take your crown from you, *i.e.*, to rob you of your constancy and perseverance, for these are the crown of a Christian. And they are called so because they are the consummating of all, according to that known maxim, the end crowns the work, *i.e.*, accomplisheth the whole enterprise. Again, perseverance is deservedly called a crown, because it is this which entitles you to a crown of glory. It is in vain that we set out well at first, and run swiftly, if we reach not the end of the race, and come up to the very goal. This may convince you of the benefit and advantage of this duty. So that I need not insist much on the evil of apostasy. Apostasy is near akin to the unpardonable sin (*Matt. v. 13*). This doctrine condemns the apostasy of these times we live in. II. THE MOST EFFECTUAL HELPS TO PERSEVERANCE, AND THE MOST SOVEREIGN ANTIDOTES AGAINST APOSTASY. 1. The first effectual help is serious deliberation and choice. For it is certain that this is one cause of apostasy that men do not sit down and consider before they enter into religion. They take up the principles and practice of religion too hastily; and so it is no wonder that as they rashly took them up, they as suddenly lay them down. The old aphorism is true here, "Nothing that is violent lasts long." Force a stone upwards with never so great strength, yet you shall soon see it fall down again. And to this purpose furnish yourselves with a sufficient stock of knowledge; for this will help to preserve you from falling away (*Prov. ii. 11, 12*). They are the ignorant and novices that usually leave the paths of uprightness. Let religion be founded in serious consideration and choice, and then you will not bid farewell to it in evil times, when you come to be tried; then you will not shrink and fall back, and, like ill-built ships, sink in the launching. 2. That you may do so, carefully look to your heart, for thence is the rise of all your backsliding. What you can do in religion, though it be never so weak and mean, do it heartily. 3. That you may hold fast that which you have, and not revolt from God and His ways, see that you be very humble. Unless you lay your foundation low, your fabric will not stand long. 4. To

humility you must not forget to join fearfulness, according to that of the apostle, "Be not high-minded, but fear." I do not speak of such a fear as is accompanied with cowardice; but such a religious awe upon our minds, whereby we are sensible of our own inability to stand, and therefore we are wary and cautious. 5. Are you desirous to persevere, and continue to the end in the ways of truth and holiness? Then see that your affections be not immoderately carried out towards this world. 6. That you may not be of this number, fix and establish yourselves by faith. "Thou standest by faith," saith the apostle (Rom. xi. 12). This grace is an establishing, confirming, strengthening grace; and as long as we maintain this, we shall never fall away. But on the contrary, know this—that unbelief is one grand cause of apostasy—which was the occasion of that caution given in Heb. iii. 12. Such as your faith is, such is your fortitude; therefore endeavour to attain great measures of this, that you may with undaunted valour withstand the temptations of the evil spirit, and keep your station when he is most desirous to put you to flight. Cleave to the Rock of Ages, and you shall stand immovable; rely on Him, and you shall be upheld; depend on His promises, and you shall never fall. 7. That you may never turn apostates, entertain a love of God and goodness in your breasts. Love as well as faith is an establishing grace. Therefore St. Jude had reason to speak thus to the Christians of his days (ver. 28), "Keep yourselves in the love of God." If they would be steadfast in their religion, they must embrace it out of love. 8. In order to perseverance be careful to nourish a patient and resigning temper of mind. 9. Grow in grace, strive for the utmost attainments in Christianity; for this likewise is an approved remedy against apostasy. See then that you cast off all slothfulness, and remember that constant endeavours and the continual exercise of Christian graces are the conditions of perseverance. Be diligent, then, to improve your graces, and to make accessions to what you have. 10. That you may continue and persevere in all holiness, take care that those means, those institutions, those ordinances, which were appointed for this purpose, be not neglected by you. Lastly, Be ever watchful and circumspect, if you would hold fast what you have. (*J. Edwards.*) *Hold fast thy crown:*—We must all feel that to "have," and then to "lose," is worse than never to have "had." For a man is to be responsible—not according to what he is to be found having at the last, but according to what he once possessed and the capability that possession gave him of possessing much more. But then you must remember what is the Bible sense of that word to "have." To "have" is to "hold" anything that so you can and do use and enjoy it. First, then, there are stores of memory. It is no trifling possession to have passages of Scripture, of sacred poetry, of holy authors, laid up in the mind. Increase the power of a sacred memory by always adding something more to the stock. And never forget that it is one of the offices and prerogatives of the Holy Ghost to assist and to empower the memory in Divine things. Secondly, the acquisition of a new truth, or a clearer perception of any truth, is a very real and very delightful possession. But, if you would "hold" a truth "fast" you must turn that truth to some practical account, for God is very jealous that His truth be not an idle thing; you must make that truth a centre, round which you are always gathering another and another truth. Then you must live that truth inwardly; and then you must live that truth outwardly. You must live it, not only for yourself; but you must live it for others. You must glorify God in it. And that truth will abide; and that truth will grow. Thirdly, you have enjoyed the things of God, the means of grace. You must be coming down from your mount to the plain—to the simple duty of daily life, to do that duty better because you have been upon the mount. Fourthly, a soft, tender heart—feelings much drawn out in strong love to God or man—is a thing greatly to be prized. But to maintain that blessed state of a mental affection, it is necessary that you live very close to God. The wax will only be soft if it is kept in the sunshine. Fifthly, an open door of usefulness is an exceeding boon when God gives it to a man. Have you it? Sixthly, to some of you it has been given to know, and not to doubt, that you can call Christ yours. And can all this pass away? Yes, it can. If that light go out, how great will that darkness be! It all depends upon the firmness and the continuance with which you hold it. Therefore, spend life in "making your calling and election sure." Do not grieve, by small resistances, that Holy Ghost which is in you. The only way to "hold fast," is to be "held fast." Under our weak hand, God's own omnipotence must lie; and we must be apprehended, that we may apprehend. (*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Thy crown:*—I. THE CROWN spoken of here is not the symbol of royalty, but the floral wreath which in ancient social life played many parts: was laid on the temples of the victors in the

games, was wreathed around the locks of the conquering general, was placed upon the anointed heads of brides and of feasters, was the emblem of victory, of festivity, of joy. And it is this crown, not the symbol of dominion, but the symbol of a race accomplished and a conquest won, an outward and visible sign of a festal day, with all its abundance and ease and abandonment to delight, which the apocalyptic vision holds out before the Christian man. The crown is spoken about under three designations—as a crown of “life,” of “righteousness,” of “glory.” The crown is the reward of righteousness, and consists of life so full that our present experience contrasted with it may almost be called an experience of death; of glory so flashing and wonderful that, if our natures were not strengthened, it would be an “exceeding weight of glory” that would crush them down, and upon all the life and all the glory is stamped the solemn signature of eternity, and they are for ever. Christian men, it much concerns the vigour of your Christianity that you should take time and pains to cultivate the habit of looking forward through all the mists of this petty present, and of thinking of that future as a certainty more certain than the contingencies of earth, and as a present possession, more real by far than any of the fleeting shadows which we proudly and falsely call our own. “Thy crown” will fit no temples but thine. It is part of thy perfected self, and certain to be thine, if thou hold fast the beginning of thy confidence firm unto the end. II. THE GRIM POSSIBILITY OF LOSING THE CROWN. “That no man take” it. Of course we are not to misunderstand the contingency shadowed here as if it meant that some other person could filch away and put on his own head the crown which once was destined for us, which is a sheer impossibility and absurdity. No man would think to win heaven by stealing another’s right of entrance there. No man could, if he were to try. The results of character cannot be transferred. Nor are we to suppose reference to the machinations of tempters, either human or diabolic, who deliberately try to rob Christians of their religion here, and thereby of their reward hereafter. But it is only too possible that men and things round about us may upset this certainty that we have been considering, and that though the crown be “thine,” it may never come to be thy actual possession in the future, nor ever be worn upon thine own happy head in the festival of the skies. That is the solemn side of the Christian life, that it is to be conceived of as lived amidst a multitude of men and things that are always trying to make us unfit to receive that crown of righteousness. If we would walk through life with this thought in our minds, how it would strip off the masks of all these temptations that buzz about us! III. THE WAY TO SECURE THE CROWN WHICH IS OURS. “Hold fast that thou hast.” The slack hand will very soon be an empty hand. Anybody walking through the midst of a crowd of thieves with a bag of gold in charge would not hold it dangling from a finger-tip, but he would put all five round it, and wrap the strings about his wrist. The first shape which we may give to this exhortation is—hold fast by what God has given in His gospel; hold fast His Son, His truth, His grace. Use honestly and diligently your intellect to fathom and to keep firm hold of the great truths and principles of the gospel. Use your best efforts to keep your wandering hearts and mobile wills fixed and true to the revealed love of the great Lover of souls, which has been given to you in Christ, and to obey Him. But there is another aspect of the same commandment which applies not so much to that which is given us in the objective revelation and manifestation of God in Christ, as to our own subjective degrees of progress in the appropriation of Christ, and in likeness to Him. And possibly that is what my text more especially means, for just a little before the Lord has said to that Church, “Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” “Thou hast a little strength . . . hold fast that which thou hast.” See to it that thy present attainment in the Christian life, though it may be but rudimentary, is at least kept. Cast not away your confidence, hold fast the beginning of your confidence firm, with a tightened hand unto the end. For if we keep what we have, it will grow. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Graces need keeping*:—Where we are most tempted, know that there is some special grace to be kept or lost. A thief will not hanker after an empty chest; but if he knows where jewels or treasure is, he will haunt there. (*Jeremy Taylor.*) *Perseverance*:—No grace, not even the most sparkling and shining, can bring us to heaven without perseverance in following Christ; not faith, if it be faint and frail; nor love, if it decline and wax cold; nor humility, if it continue not to the end; nor obedience, not repentance, not patience, no, nor any other grace, except they have their perfect work. It is not enough to begin well, unless we end well. (*T. Brooks.*)

Ver. 12. **Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God.**—*The Philadelphian conqueror*:—I. THE CONQUEROR IS TO BE A TEMPLE-PILLAR. Not an outside, but an inside pillar. The interior colonnades or double rows of tall pillars in some churches and temples are splendid beyond description. They are part of the vast fabric; not like those who minister there, going out and in, but standing immovable in their surpassing beauty. Such is the reward of the Philadelphian conqueror. An everlasting inhabitant and ornament of that sanctuary of which we read, "I saw no temple therein," &c. They shall go no more out! Their home is the innermost shrine in the heaven of heavens. Like Jachin and Boaz (1 Kings vii. 15, 21), there they stand for ever. II THE CONQUEROR IS TO BE INSCRIBED WITH GLORIOUS NAMES. It is said of Christ that He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." It is said of the redeemed in glory that they have their Father's name written on their foreheads (chap. xiv. 1); so here on these Philadelphian pillars are many names to be inscribed, each of them unutterably glorious. These inscriptions are written by Christ Himself: "I will write." He engraves these names upon these temple-pillars, that they may be eternal witnesses to them in the glorious sanctuary. The inscriptions to be thus engraven are as follows: 1. The name of my God. This is the name which God proclaimed to Moses, the name which is the summary of His blessed character, as the God of all grace. What honour! To be the marble on which Jehovah's name is carved, and from which it shall blaze forth in the eternal temple! 2. The name of the city of my God. Other pillars set up on earth by man have the names of deities, or kings, or warriors, or cities graven upon them. But this inscription excels all in glory. 3. My new name. This is the new name given by Christ, which no man knoweth save he who receiveth it. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The Christians final triumph*:—I. THE QUALIFICATION INSISTED UPON IN THE TEXT. "Him that overcometh." 1. The term evidently implies a struggle and conflict. 2. The term "overcometh" implies daily advancement and success. 3. A third feature of the man who "overcometh" is perseverance. His religion is not the mere meteor of the moment, extinguished almost as soon as kindled. He will set his face like a flint against corruption; will "resist, even unto blood, the contradiction of sinners" against the Master he loves. II. THE PROMISES ADDRESSED IN THE TEXT TO THE VICTORIOUS SERVANTS OF THE REDEEMER. 1. The successful Christian shall be "made a pillar in the temple of his God." In this world the servant of the Redeemer may be a mere outcast in society. Nevertheless, "he that overcometh shall be made a pillar in the temple of God." That poor outcast, if a true servant of Christ, shall be stripped of his rags and wretchedness, and be raised as a pillar of ornament in the temple of the Lord. Great will be the changes of the last day: "the first shall be last and the last first." 2. He "shall go no more out." The sun of his joys shall never go down. The wellspring of his comforts shall never fail. 3. "I will write on him the name of My God." In this world, it is possible that the sincere Christian may be perplexed, either by his own doubts of acceptance with God or by the suspicions and insinuations of others; but in heaven his acceptance and adoption will be no longer a disputable point. He shall be recognised by Him who has stamped him with His own name. 4. "I will write on him the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." Even here it is "the city not made with hands" which the Christian seeks. And to that city he shall be exalted in heaven. 5. "I will write upon him My new Name." (*J. W. Cunningham.*) *Fidelity rewarded*:—1. IN HEAVEN NOBLE SERVICE. Believers are called in the epistles, even while they are on earth, "the temple of God." But how often it is desecrated and defiled! Here the same image has a more glorious and fitting application to the perfect life of heaven. We seem to see the entire company of God's servants fitly framed together into one vast, living temple; the polished stones brought from many distant parts. What worship there, where every stone has a tongue to praise, a heart to feel! But as, in examining a noble pile of building, the great whole distracts you, and you turn from it to look separately at single parts—a window, or an arch—so let us follow our heavenly guide, as, leading us through the "temple of His God," He points our attention to one of its component parts, bids us observe the functions of a "pillar" in it. It is the office of a pillar to support, uphold, an edifice, and also to adorn it. A column, then, is a noble part of any building; noble because of its important function—to sustain within a small compass the weight of the spreading roof and arches; and noble also because there can be joined with this utility beauty of form and wealth of ornament. Then, too, a pillar is not something extraneous,

introduced into a building for a temporary purpose, and then to be removed; but it is an essential part of it. So the servant whom Christ makes a pillar in God's temple shall by that appointment become himself an actual part of heaven itself, bearing its glories up by the unwearied strength of his own hands, and adding to its beauty by his holiness and by the bright success attending all his toils. As a column has no wasted parts, but is so shaped that every atom bears its due proportion of the weight, or carries ornament in keeping with the beauties around it, so you are being moulded, by the Divine Workman who makes the pillars for that temple, in such wise that your energies will neither be left latent nor be overstrained, but developed to the full, and kept in joyous exercise, till you, in your place there, will become a very part of heaven, its beauty and blessedness augmented by the contribution of your pure delight. For the light of God will flash back reflected from the pillars there. II. NO LAST HOURS IN HEAVEN. This expressive image of a pillar is often applied, and justly, to the positions men occupy on earth. For men of high faculties do often find worthy scope for their powers—fill important posts with eminent success. The warrior who saves his country's independence—what a noble pillar of its fortunes is he! Or the statesman, who develops its resources, and conducts it to greatness and renown—how fitly is he called a pillar of the state! When the great abilities needed for such high stations are employed in filling them, have we not all we covet, namely, noble faculties in noblest exercise? Well, forget if you will the failures and disappointments which attend such careers, yet will you say that such a lot is comparable to heaven? Look on a few years. A great funeral passes by—the pillar is broken. Out of his high place he goes, and does not return. Oh, what an abatement of pride to know that any day the stately column may fall prostrate in the dust! But he whom Christ makes a pillar in the temple of His God “shall go no more out.” His strength and beauty will never know decay. III. SUCH SERVICE IS THE REWARD OF VICTORY HERE. For he whom Christ makes a pillar there, is “him that overcometh.” So that the temptations, the disappointments, the wretched weaknesses, all so harassing, and in such sad contrast to the bright light above, are not hostile to it, but co-operate towards it. The stability of heaven, so firm and glorious, is to be won only by patient endurance of earth's changes and earnest conflict with its sins. So if you want to work for God there, with delightful ease, you must learn by hard effort here to use your hands skilfully for Him. The workman who does the hardest task with greatest ease has gained that dexterity only by years of strenuous toil. And so the servants who do God's work with joyous ease in heaven, have all come out of great tribulation, and have by that hard discipline been schooled into their glorious proficiency, and only after a long, fierce conflict did they “overcome.” IV. THE DOUBLE AGENCY SPOKEN OF. “Him that overcometh”: the man must fight and conquer. “I will make him a pillar”: like a passive column, he is fashioned by another's hand. Yes; both are true. We must act; not because God does not, but because He does. Christ, by the might and skill of His Divine hand, makes a pillar, not of the man who wishes and dreams, but of the man who overcomes. The blows of misfortune, which were so hard to bear and seemed so disastrous, were the strokes of His Divine chisel, educing beauty from deformity. The bitter deprivation of what they prized so much, and which excited such complaints, was the cutting away of what would have for ever disfigured God's temple if it had remained. (T. M. Herbert, M.A.) *A pillar in the temple, the emblem of moral character*:—I. HERE IS THE IDEA OF SANCTITY. II. HERE IS THE IDEA OF STRENGTH. God uses the good in the maintenance of His Church in the world, hence they must give their best sympathy, talent, and effort in its service. The good will be stronger in the temple above. III. HERE IS THE IDEA OF PERMANENCE. In this life moral character in its higher mood is uncertain in continuance; it is beset by many enemies who would carry it out of the temple of God; but there it will be eternally amidst scenes of devotion and splendour. IV. HERE IS THE IDEA OF INSCRIPTION. In heaven moral character will be more God-like; it will be transformed by a vision of the Eternal. Every man's life has some inscription on it, which is read by the world. Lessons: 1. That the good are consecrated to Divine uses in life. 2. That the good are to be morally useful in life. That the good should in their lives exhibit the name of God. (J. S. Exell, M.A.) *The promises to the victor*:—I. THE STEADFAST PILLAR. Now, I take it that the two clauses which refer to this matter are closely connected. “I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.” In the second clause the figure is dropped; and the point of the metaphor is brought out more clearly. Here it cannot mean the office of sustaining a building, or pre-

eminence above others, as it naturally lends itself sometimes to mean. For instance, the Apostle Paul speaks of the three chief apostles in Jerusalem and says that they "seemed to be pillars." We cannot conceive of even redeemed men sustaining that temple in the heavens; and also, inasmuch as the promise here is perfectly universal, and is given to all that overcome. Now, the second of the two clauses which are thus linked together seems to me to point to the direction in which we are to look. "He shall go no more out." A pillar is a natural emblem of stability and permanence, as poets in many tongues, and in many lands, have felt it to be. But whilst the general notion is that of stability and permanence, do not let us forget that it is permanence and stability in a certain direction, for the pillar is "in the temple of my God." And whilst there are ideas of dignity and grace attaching to the metaphor of the pillar, the underlying meaning of it is substantially that the individual souls of redeemed men shall be themselves parts, and collectively shall constitute the temple of God in the heavens. The special point in which that perfection and transcendence are expressed here is to be kept prominent. "He shall go no more out." Permanence, and stability, and uninterruptedness in the communion and consciousness of an indwelling God, is a main element in the glory and blessedness of that future life. Stability in any fashion comes as a blessed hope to us, who know the cause of constant change, and are tossing on the unquiet waters of life. Sometimes the bay is filled with flashing waters that leap in the sunshine; sometimes, when the tide is out, there is only a long stretch of grey and oozy mud. It shall not be always so. Like lands on the equator, where the difference between midsummer and midwinter is scarcely perceptible, either in length of day or in degree of temperature, that future will be a calm continuance, a uniformity which is not monotony, and a stability which does not exclude progress. "He shall go no more out." Eternal glory and unbroken communion is the blessed promise to the victor who is made by Christ "a pillar in the temple of my God."

II. Now, secondly, notice THE THREEFOLD INSCRIPTION. The writing of a name implies ownership and visibility. So the first of the triple inscriptions declares that the victor shall be conspicuously God's. "I will write upon him the name of my God." There may possibly be an allusion to the golden plate which flamed in the front of the High Priest's mitre, and on which was written the unspoken name of Jehovah. How do we possess one another? How do we belong to God? How does God belong to us? There is but one way by which a spirit can possess a spirit—by love; which leads to self-surrender and to practical obedience. And if—as a man writes his name in his books, as a farmer brands on his sheep and oxen the marks that express his ownership—on the redeemed there is written the name of God, that means, whatever else it may mean, perfect love, perfect self-surrender, perfect obedience. That is the perfecting of the Christian relationship which is begun here on earth. In the preceding letter to Sardis we were told that the victor's name should not "be blotted out of the book of life." Here the same thought is suggested by a converse metaphor. The name of the victor is written on the rolls of the city; and the name of the city is stamped on the forehead of the victor. That is to say, the affinity which even here and now has knit men who believe in Jesus Christ to an invisible order, where is their true mother-city and metropolis, will then be uncontradicted by any inconsistencies, unobscured by the necessary absorption in daily duties and transient aims and interests which often veils to others, and renders less conscious to ourselves, our true belonging to the city beyond the sea. The last of the triple inscriptions declares that the victor shall be conspicuously Christ's. "I will write upon him My new name." What is that new name? It is an expression for the sum of the new revelations of what He is, which will flood the souls of the redeemed when they pass from earth. That new name will not obliterate the old one—God forbid! It will do away with the ancient, earth-begun relation of dependence and faith and obedience. "Jesus Christ is the same . . . for ever"; and His name in the heavens, as upon earth, is Jesus the Saviour. That new name no man fully knows, even when he has entered on its possession, and carries it on his forehead; for the infinite Christ, who is the manifestation of the infinite God, can never be comprehended, much less exhausted, even by the united perceptions of a redeemed universe, but for ever and ever more and more will well out from Him. His name shall last as long as the sun, and blaze when the sun himself is dead. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Vers. 14-22. **The Laodiceans.**—*Laodicea—the self-complacent Church*:—Laodicea is the type of a self-complacent Church. Underneath the condemnation of luke-

warmness there is a yet more heart-searching lesson. Lukewarmness itself is the sure result of self-complacency; it is absolutely impossible for self-complacent men to be other than lukewarm. If we grasp this truth we get below symptoms of a grave and conspicuous evil in Churches to its very source; we reach the heart and display its hidden weakness and woe. Perhaps, also, we shall find the way of deliverance; many a man is lukewarm, and he knows not why. It is his constant sorrow and his wonder; he ought to be earnest, and he feels he is not. To show any who may be conscious of this strange indifference the real reason of their unimpassioned, powerless piety, to disclose the secret of the lukewarmness which is their never-forgotten perplexity and their self-reproach, may suggest to them how they are to be cured. There are two points in the description of the self-complacency of Laodicea, the simple statement of which bites like satire; it is the self-complacency, first, of the moneyed man, and, secondly, of the so-called self-made man. By a strange moral irony the self-complacent man fixes his attention on what he has of least value, and lets his higher possibilities go unthought of. The R.V., "I am rich and have gotten riches," strikes harshly on the ear accustomed to the older reading, "I am rich and increased with goods"; but it has this merit—it shows us the self-complacent congratulating himself that he is the author of his own success. Laodicea "was a town of some consequence in the Roman province of Asia." "Its trade was considerable; it lay on the line of a great road." It is now a ruin, absolute and utter; the site of its stadium, its gymnasium, and its theatres alone discernible. "North of the town are many sarcophagi, with their covers lying near them, partly embedded in the ground, and all having been long since rifled." "The remains of an aqueduct are there, with stone barrel-pipes, incrusting with calcareous matter, and some completely closed up." It is an awful historic parable—broken buildings, rifled tombs, water-pipes choked with the earthy matter they conveyed. So may the soul be charged with the dregs of what we allow to filter through it; so will the soul be rifled which has allowed itself to become a tomb, the receptacle of dead forms of activity that might have been ennobled with the highest life. The curse of societies which measure the things of God by a worldly standard—and where this is not done, self-complacency is impossible—is the inevitable degradation and ruin which set in. There is no common measure between the surpassing purpose of the Saviour and the satisfaction men have in what they have attained, and in themselves for having attained it. "All things are possible to me," says the believer in Christ; for his faith goes out to a life, an energy beyond him; it becomes surety for what his eye has not seen. "All things are possible to me," says the worldly Christian; for he takes care never to admit into his purpose anything more than he has already achieved. Where the purpose is thus debased the thought is narrow, and mind, and heart, and soul are contracted to the limit of what they hold. So, when the appeal of the gospel is made, there is no response; there is nothing which seems worth a transcendent effort. The man is lukewarm, there is nothing to fire him in his purpose, no heart in him to be fired. He is poor for all his wealth. Thus the central thought of the message to Laodicea, when once we have caught it, dominates all our perception; it recurs to us again and again; its inevitableness strikes us; we never can forget that the self-complacent man or Church is and must be lukewarm. In Hogarth's picture of Bedlam, the most distressing figures are those of the self-complacent—the Pope with his paper tiara and lathen cross; the astronomer with paper tube, devoid of lenses, sweeping not the heavens, but the walls of the madhouse; the naked king, with sceptre and crown of straw. Their misery is seen upon their faces; even their self-complacency cannot hide it. The heart is hopeless where the man is self-centred; gladness is as foreign as enthusiasm to him who is full of the sense of what he has acquired. But out of this same dominating thought comes the hope of recovery. When we are conscious of lukewarmness, the first thing which occurs to us is that we ought to be earnest; and we set ourselves to try to be so. We try to arouse the lukewarm to intensity; we lash them with scorn; we overwhelm them with demonstrations of their misery, and present them with images of the resolved; "Be earnest," we cry to them again and again; "without earnestness there is no possibility of Christian life." How vain it all is! The young may be awakened by appeals; but not those who have come to their lassitude through prosperity, "the rich, and increased with goods." One way remains—give them to see the glory of Christ; there is in Him a sublimity, an augustness, a moral dignity and worth which may thrill the soul with a new passion, and set the tides of life flowing toward a central splendour. And this is what we find in the message to Laodicea. First there is presented a stately image

of Him who walks about among the seven golden candlesticks. "These things saith the Amen," &c. We feel at once the mystic sublimity of the phrases: an unrevealed grandeur is behind the form of the man Christ Jesus, arousing our expectation, moving the heart with a faintly imagining awe. Next, we have a picture of the tender Saviour, one which has entered into our common Christian speech as few presentations even of Christ have, luring on the painter to body forth, and the poet to describe what they can never express, but what we all can feel. "Behold, I stand at the door," &c. Here, too, is a cure for self-complacency. The heart can be won by tenderness. And then there is the sublime promise, so reserved, yet sounding into such depths of suggestion—"He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down," &c. The throne on which Christ is seated is a Divine throne; but it is also a throne on which are exalted disappointed human hopes. When Jesus died upon the cross He died in faith of what He had not realised. And then the triumph came. God "raised him up from the dead and gave Him glory." Christ's mission is accomplished when human souls awaken to a faith and a hope for ever in advance of all men can attain to on earth, a faith and a hope which are in God. There is a cure for self-complacency here; and with self-complacency the deathly lukewarmness is gone. There are some pathetic touches which we should notice before closing this solemn, heart-searching appeal to the self-complacent. The abrupt change of tone in vers. 17 and 18 is significant. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked"—with such an introduction, what words may we not expect to follow, of warning, censure, doom? They are not spoken. The Lord begins in another strain—"I counsel thee to buy of Me," &c. The pathos of all self-complacency, at once its condemnation and the more than hope of deliverance from it, is this—the delivering Lord is so nigh. The true riches, the robe of righteousness, the Divine vision, all are for us; to be bought, as God's best gifts can only be bought, "without money and without price." Some words follow with which we are very familiar, the thought they express entering so largely into Biblical teaching and human experience. "As many as I love," &c. One of the suggestions of this utterance is, that with all its self-complacency Laodicea was profoundly unhappy. The denizens of Bedlam are more than half conscious of their derangement; the self-satisfied Christian knows how deep is his discontent. Another suggestion is that of coming tribulation; the knocking at the door of which the next verse speaks is an intimation that trouble is at hand. Let it come; it will be welcome; anything will be welcome which can stir this mortal lethargy. The treasures of the Divine chastisement are not exhausted; and they are treasures of the Divine love. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*)

Laodicea:—I. THREE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST. 1. "The Amen." This sets forth His immutability. 2. "The faithful and true Witness." (1) Christ is a Witness—(a) In His personal life and death. (b) By the Holy Spirit in the inspired Word, in the plan of redemption, and in the organisation of the Church. (c) In the hearts of individual believers, where He dwells by faith. (2) Christ, as Witness, in this threefold sense, is faithful and true. (3) His promised rewards will be faithfully fulfilled, and His threatened penalties will be strictly carried out. 3. "The beginning of the creation of God." The Head, Prince, or Potentate. **II. THE TWO-FOLD CHARACTER OF THE LAODICEAN CHURCH.** 1. Latitudinarian. 2. Self-deceived.

III. CHRIST'S APPROPRIATE COUNSEL. 1. This counsel is characteristic of our Lord. (1) Tender and considerate. (2) Appropriate and definite. (3) Timely and solemn. 2. This counsel is very suggestive. (1) "Buy of Me." In one sense grace cannot be bought. It has been bought—not with silver and gold, &c. In another sense, if we are not willing to give up the world and its sinful pleasures for Divine grace, we shall not obtain it. (2) "Gold tried in the fire." That which enriches the soul for ever, and will endure the test of His judgment. (3) "White raiment" (chap. xix. 8). (4) "Eye-salve." The illumination of the Holy Spirit. **IV. THREE PROOFS OF CHRIST'S LOVING INTEREST.** 1. Discipline. 2. Patient, personal appeals to those who have practically rejected Him. 3. His gracious proffer of the highest honour to him who becomes conqueror in His name. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*)

The word of Christ to the congregation at Laodicea:—I. ITS REAL CHARACTER WAS THOROUGHLY KNOWN. **II. ITS SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENTISM IS DIVINELY ABHORRENT.** 1. Spiritual indifferentism is a most incongruous condition. 2. Spiritual indifferentism is a most incorrigible condition. **III. ITS SELF-DECEPTION IS TERRIBLY ALARMING.** **IV. ITS MISERABLE CONDITION NEED NOT BE HOPELESS.** 1. Recovery is

freely offered. 2. Recovery is Divinely urged. 3. Recovery is Divinely rewarded. (1) The throne of an approving conscience. (2) The throne of moral rule. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *The Church abhorrent to Christ because of the lukewarm temperature of its spiritual life* :—I. THIS CHURCH WAS LUKEWARM IN THE TEMPERATURE OF ITS SPIRITUAL LIFE. 1. The language of this verse aptly describes the religious state of many Churches now. (1) A lukewarm Church is unique in the world. In every sphere of life, save the moral, men are red hot. (2) A lukewarm Church is useless in the world. It cannot make any progress against a vigilant devil and a wicked world. (3) A lukewarm Church is an anomaly in the world. The Church is destined to represent on earth the most energetic and spiritual ministries which exist in the unseen universe. (4) A lukewarm Church has much tending to awaken it. It should be awakened by a study of the lives of the Old and New Testament saints, by the earnest life of Christ, by the great need of the world, by the transitoriness of life, and by the quickening influences of the Divine Spirit. 2. That this lukewarm Church was abhorrent to the Divine Being. It is better to be a sinner than a merely nominal Christian; because the latter brings a greater reproach upon the name of Christ; because the latter is in the greater peril; and because hypocrisy is a greater sin than profanity. II. THIS LUKEWARM CHURCH, SADLY DECEIVED, WAS WISELY COUNSELLED AS TO THE REAL CONDITION OF ITS SPIRITUAL LIFE. 1. Sad deception. (1) The members of this Church imagined that they were rich and had need of nothing. (2) The members of this Church imagined that they were prosperous. (3) The members of this Church imagined that they had attained all possible excellence. 2. Wise counsel. (1) This Church was advised to get true wealth. (2) This Church was advised to get renewed purity. (3) This Church was advised to get clear vision. (4) This Church was advised to get Christly merchandise. 3. Disguised love. All the Divine rebukes are for the moral good of souls, and should lead to repentance and zeal. III. THIS CHURCH WAS URGENTLY ENCOURAGED TO AMEND ITS MORAL CONDITION AND TO ENTER UPON A ZEALOUS LIFE. The advice of Christ is always encouraging. He will help the most degraded Church into a new life. Lessons: 1. That a lukewarm Church is abhorrent to the Divine mind. 2. That Christ gives wise counsel to proud souls. 3. That the most valuable things of life are to be had from Christ without money and without price. 4. Are we possessed of this gold, raiment, eyesalve? (J. S. Exell, M.A.)

These things saith the Amen.—*Christ's names*:—The name which the Lord assumes in addressing this Church is threefold, yet one—"the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God." The name "Amen" as here employed has its root in the Old Testament, where God is called "the God of truth," the God of the Verily, the God of Amen—not merely distinguishing Him from the "lying vanities" of the heathen and the phantom-gods of philosophy, but bringing into view the absolute truth of His nature and of all His attributes. We cannot but mark how supremely and absolutely, in assuming this name, Jesus claims to be what the Jehovah of the Old Testament was. Two successive steps may give us a glimpse of the meaning of this name as now assumed and worn by the Lord. In the first place, He Himself is true, and deserves our absolute trust. His compassions are true, His love is true, His word is true, His smile is true, yea, His very silence is true, even as He said to His disciples, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He does not say and unsay; He does not come and go; He is without variableness or shadow of turning. In the second place, He is the Amen, the Verily, to all that God has spoken. The ancient promises that had come down through thousands of years unfulfilled are fulfilled in Him, and that not in the letter merely, but in the inner spirit. The promises that still look to the future are in Him certain and sure, as hopes. And so with every word that God has spoken, whether promise or threatening. There is no may be or may not be about them; in Him they are all Amen. He is their full and sure accomplishment, even as He is the accomplishment of the past. Besides being the Amen, Jesus is to the Laodiceans "the faithful and true Witness." He is the Messenger and Revealer of the Father, who answers all the deep questions of the conscience and heart, as well as of the intellect, according to the ancient prophecy—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people." "I have manifested Thy name," He says to the Father, "unto the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world." It is essential to a witness that he have personal knowledge of that which he reports; and this Witness was in the bosom of the Father, and knows what is in His heart. As Witness He is "faithful and true." These two words are like the right hand and the left. As I conceive, they are not interchangeable; but each conveys its own distinct and special meaning. Taken

together, they mark that He kept back nothing which the Father delivered unto Him, and that all He said might be relied upon to the last jot and tittle. Once more the Lord names Himself "the Beginning of the creation of God." We trace "the things that are" back and up to Jesus Christ; He is the uncaused cause of their being, their vital origin, "willing" them into existence; and the "increasing purpose" is but the gradual unfolding of the thought of His heart. It is the same truth that fills such words as these: "All things were made by Him," &c. "In Him (comprehended within the sphere of His being, power, and will) were all things created," &c. The grand thought is, that this glorious universe, whose origin lies back of human imagination, was brought into being (according to the will of the eternal Father) by our blessed Redeemer's creative power, and exists for His sake. (*J. Culross, D.D.*) The *Amen*:—The word "Amen" is much more full of meaning than may be supposed, and as a title of our Lord Jesus Christ it is eminently suggestive. I might have divided my discourse very fairly under these three heads—asserting, consenting, petitioning. For in each of these our adorable Lord Jesus Christ is certainly "the Amen." He asserts the will of God—He asserts God Himself. God the Son is constantly called the Word; He who asserts, declares, and testifies God. In the second place, we know that Jesus Christ consents to the will, design, and purpose of Jehovah. He gives an Amen to the will of God—is, in fact, the echo, in His life and in His death, of the eternal purposes of the Most High. And, thirdly, He is "the Amen" in the petitionary sense, for to all our prayers He gives whatever force and power they have. But we have preferred to divide the discourse another way. I. OUR LORD IS SUPERLATIVELY GOD'S AMEN. 1. Long ere you and I had a being, before this great world started out of nothingness, God had made every purpose of His eternal counsel to stand fast and firm by the gift of His dear Son to us. He was then God's Amen to His eternal purpose. 2. When our Lord actually came upon the earth, He was then God's Amen to the long line of prophecies. That babe among the horned oxen, that carpenter's son, was God's declaration that prophesy was the voice of heaven. 3. Christ was God's Amen to all the Levitical types. Especially when up to the Cross as to the altar He went as a victim and was laid thereon, then it was that God solemnly put an Amen into what otherwise was but typical and shadowy. 4. Christ is God's Amen to the majesty of His law. He has not sinned Himself, but He has the sins of all His people imputed to Him. He has never broken the law, but all our breaches thereof were laid on Him. The law says He is accursed, for He has sin upon Him: will the Father consent that His own Beloved shall be made a curse for us? Hearken and hear the Lord's Amen. "Awake, O sword, against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord." What, does God the Father say Amen? Can it be? It is even so. He says, Amen. And what an awful Amen too, when the sweat of blood started from every pore of His immaculate body. 5. Jesus Christ is very blessedly God's Amen to all His covenant promises, for is it not written that "all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him Amen." 6. Jesus Christ will be God's Amen at the conclusion of this dispensation in the fulness of time. II. HE IS OUR AMEN IN HIMSELF. 1. He proved Himself to be Amen; the God of truth, sincerity, and faithfulness in His fulfilment of covenant engagements. "Lo I come!" In the volume of the book it is written of Me: I delight to do Thy will, O God." From all eternity He declared Himself to be ready to go through the work, and when the time came He was straightened till the work was done. 2. He was also "the Amen" in all His teachings. We have already remarked that He constantly commenced with "Verily, verily I say unto you." Christ as teacher does not appeal to tradition, or even to reasoning, but gives Himself as His authority. 3. He is also "the Amen" in all His promises. Sinner, I would comfort thee with this reflection. 4. Jesus Christ is yea and Amen in all His offices. He was a priest to pardon and cleanse once; He is Amen as priest still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm; He is an Amen King, the same still. He was a prophet of old to foretell good things to come; His lips are most sweet, and drop with honey still—He is an Amen Prophet. 5. He is Amen with regard to His person. He is still faithful and true, immutably the same. Not less than God! Omnipotent, immutable, eternal, omnipresent still! God over all, blessed for ever. O Jesus, we adore Thee, Thou great Amen. He is the same, too, as to His manhood. Bone of our bone still; in all our afflictions still afflicted. III. HE IS EXPERIMENTALLY GOD'S AMEN TO EVERY BELIEVING SOUL. 1. He is God's Amen in us. If you want to know God you must know Christ; if you want to be sure of the truth of the Bible you must believe Jesus. 2. Jesus Christ is "the

Amen" not only in us, but "the Amen" for us. When you pray, you say Amen. Did you think of Christ? Did you offer your prayer through Him? Did you ask Him to present it before God? If not, there is no Amen to your prayer. 3. I want that Jesus Christ should be God's Amen in all our hearts, as to all the good things of the covenant of grace; I am sure He will be if you receive Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Amen :—What, then, is the meaning of this sacred word? It means truth; it means reality. I want to bring before you the awfulness of truth—that is, of reality, of sincerity, of guileless simplicity, both as regards our conduct in the life that now is and as regards the eternal life of man's spirit. First, as regards our earthly life. We may each of us spend our lives either in the world or in God. If we live in God—"if that life which we now live in the flesh is lived by faith in the Son of God"—then we are living in the world of reality. If we are living for the world—if we are setting our affections on the things of the earth—we are living in the midst of fatal delusions and fading shadows. Let a man but once catch a glimpse of the true light, and he learns utterly to despise the dim rushlights of this earth's tinselled stage; let but one ray out of eternity shine down into his heart, and for him the world and the things of the world shrivel into insignificance. God is the Amen, and all His laws are eternal: they abide for ever; they are laws not only of reality, not only of righteousness, but of pleasantness and peace. Earnestly, then, would I invite you all to base yourselves on the "Amen," on the solid and ultimate reality of life, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And no less earnestly would I invite you to base your unshaken lives on the Amen of true religion, without which the house of your life will only be built upon sand. The Church depends solely on the presence of Christ. Religious partisans show their greatest zeal always not for God's eternal verities, but for what is doubtful and questionable and valueless, and often they pass over the whole essential message and meaning of the gospel of Christ in order to insist on the grossest misinterpretation of some single text. But God is the God of Amen, that is, of truth. Let us then look to the basis of our faith and the basis of our conduct. "Will ye, by hypocrisy in conduct, will ye, by petty unreality in faith, offer to the God of Truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie?" Reality, sincerity, holiness—the elementary Christian graces, faith, hope, love—the primary Christian duties, soberness, temperance, chastity—these are the things and these are the tests of a true religion; apart from these all else is fringes and phylacteries. (*Dean Farrar.*)

The Beginning of the creation of God.—*The creation of God* :—The third appellation cannot be limited to the thought of the mere material creation, as if equivalent to the statement that by the Word were all things made. It would thus fail to correspond with the two appellations preceding it, which undoubtedly apply to the work of redemption, while, at the same time, the addition of the words "of God" would be meaningless or perplexing. Let us add to this that in chap. i. 5, immediately after Jesus has been called the "faithful Witness," He is described as the "First-begotten of the dead," and we shall not be able to resist the conviction that the words before us refer primarily to the new creation, the Christian Church, that redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*)

I know thy works, that thou art neither hot nor cold.—*The condition of the Laodiceans* :—"I know thy works." There is to be no dealing with them in the dark, as man is compelled to do; no drawing of a bow at a venture; the arrow is aimed straight at the mark. He is about to judge the Laodiceans, and His judgment proceeds on a perfect knowledge of their condition. "Thy works," in all that they are and all that they mean and involve, lie open under Mine eye, in the broad, bright sunshine, as they do not lie open even to thyself. An awful thought! you exclaim. Yes, but also unspeakably precious. It is the word, not of the detective who has found us out, and who delivers us to the judge, but of the physician who comprehends our case. His knowledge, His diagnosis, if I may so say, is the stepping-stone of His grace and help. What the works were is not set forth in detail in the epistle. It is not mere quantity, so to speak, but quality that is taken into account. The special region into which the Lord looks is that of the affections. The stress of His charge is that they were indifferent: "I know thy works, that thou art neither hot nor cold." From what follows it is evident that the Laodiceans themselves were quite satisfied with things as they were, and had no wish for a change. Christian discipleship (rooted in faith) implies love to Jesus Christ personally. Not merely a true creed, not merely a virtuous and beautiful life, but the heart's love. There may be very few on earth who think our love worth the having; but not so with Jesus, the glorified Redeemer. Man all over, He desires and seeks our love. Year by year our fellowship with Him

ought to become more close and delightful; year by year our hearts should become more fully His; and last love should be a greater thing than even first love. In the light of such considerations let us now look at Christ's words to Laodicea. "Thou art not cold." A Church of Christ should certainly not be that. Yet such Churches exist. They are quite orthodox; their creed is a model of clearness and Scripturalness; they are examples of moral propriety; there is not merely good order, but even fine taste and exquisite grace in their arrangements; yet the temperature is down at freezing-point. Now, the Laodiceans were not cold. The Lord testifies that concerning them. Neither were they "hot." The condition indicated by this word is one of entire devotedness and joyful response to the love of Him who died for us, and rose again. It is not merely the supreme affection of a holy soul, rising above all others and commanding them; in some sense it carries in it and contains all other Divine affections, and is also the sum of all duty—the fulfilling of all law. Now the Laodicean Church was not in a condition like this. There was nothing among them that could be called fervour, or zeal, or self-consecration, or enthusiasm, or holy passion in the cause of Christ. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." Their condition (for it is a condition, and not a stage in the process of warming) is described by the word "lukewarm." Love, zeal, joy, delight in worship, desire for the salvation of men, and every other Christian affection and emotion, have been cooling down till they have reached the temperature of indifference. The lukewarmness is shown in all directions. It is shown in the angel of the Church dealing in pleasant nothings, instead of the mighty truths of God, or in intellectual and philosophic refinements, in place of the gospel of grace—accommodating his words to the taste of his hearers, lest he should lose his popularity and preach them away from the church—it is shown in the general community, who love to have it so. It is shown in the tone of conversation common among them, which, instead of being alway with grace, seasoned with salt, degenerates so readily into gossip, debate, frivolity, uncharitable censure of the absent, or merest religious gabble, in which the tongue does everything and the heart does nothing. It is shown in the weekly assembly, in the conscious "distance" from God that is maintained; in the dislike of spiritual thought, and indeed incapacity for it, and unfitness to deal with any great and deep questions of Divine truth. It is shown in the lightness with which they regard abounding iniquity, smiling where once their eyes would have filled with sudden tears, and they would have withdrawn to pray. It is shown in the neglect of personal effort for the extension of the gospel, and the transference of the work to a substitute—a missionary or Bible-woman—paid at the cheapest possible rate, with the boast of having found the missing link. It is shown in conformity to the world, in the love of worldly society and amusements, in doing what is religiously fashionable, in giving the cold shoulder to unapplauded truth, and in avoiding whatever leads to reproach and the cross. It is shown in the practical powerlessness of the creed which they profess to hold; the most awful and mysterious truths, as one has expressed it, "losing all the power of truths, and lying bedridden in the dormitory of the soul." It is unnecessary to proceed further with an account of this evil estate. It is made up of negations, and chiefly the negation of all earnestness. Some things indeed there are that evoke feeling in a lukewarm Church, even to passionateness. Let one, for example, tell plain truth about wine-bibbing or ball-rooms or theatres; or let one whose soul is thrilled with a sense of Divine mercy, and who longs to be Christ-like, stand up in the church-meeting and propose united prayer for the revival of religion; or let some Jeremiah with the fire in his bones stand up, not fearing the face of clay, and speak of eternal things with cries and anguish and weeping; and instantly you find the very passion of resentment aroused—though it dare not, for shame's sake, express itself plainly—against this troubling of Israel, this breaking of the peace, this molesting of souls, this accusing of the brethren; while it moves them not to know that the honour of Christ's name and the salvation of the perishing are at stake. What is the secret of all this? For beforehand we should pronounce lukewarmness on the part of saved men an impossibility; and it can never be regarded otherwise than as most unnatural and even dreadful in a Christian Church. How does it come to pass? One cause, operating more extensively and with greater force than is commonly thought, is the endeavour to retain the first joy of conversion without making progress. The whole and only joy sought after is the joy of forgiveness, to the neglect of the joy of holiness and new obedience. The consequence is that gradually they lose the very joy they have, and sink down into a state of heartless apathy. Again, there is failure in personal, living, realising communion with the Lord Jesus Himself as our Redeemer.

It is the grand lack of to-day. Is it strange that spiritual fervour should decline? Would it not be a miracle if it continued? It is as if a betrothed should cease to correspond with her affianced husband; the natural result is the decay of affection. Another cause, operating very widely and very subtly, is unbelief in the fulness and power of grace to enable us to live a victorious Christian life. It is quietly taken for granted that a life of self-consecration and likeness to the Son of God is an impossibility, and that the very utmost we can expect is a never-ceasing debate (conflict it cannot be called) between the flesh and the Spirit, with "heaven" somehow at the end. The question of main interest—apparently never quite settled—is, How to get clear off in the day of judgment? As for reproducing the life of Christ among men, manifesting it afresh in this mortal body, and being in some real sense His "gospels" to our age, this is smiled at as a very simple imagination indeed. Then, next, those who forget how high the Christian calling is, and who neglect fellowship with God, become blind to the evil of intermingling the Church and the world in one visible community. For the sake of numbers, or out of friendship with the world, or to make ourselves seem great, or out of a cruel charitableness, the flesh is received into church-fellowship, is treated as a Christian, is taught to use Christian forms of speech, to sing Christian hymns, to pray Christian prayers, to do Christian acts, to aim at the production of Christian virtues, to sit down with saints at the Lord's table and commemorate a love that is not believed in or felt. The necessary issue in the long run—indeed, the run is not very long—is the repression of spiritual fervour in the Church and the spread of apathy. Another thing working most disastrously is the poor, poor conception prevalent in Churches of the tremendous necessity of salvation. It is first emptied of its significance, and then it is put into the second rank instead of the first, and then the ardour of the Church inevitably cools, and they are content and take it as quite a matter of course that there should be no conversion of sinners to God. Again, there is the spirit of self-pleasing, the love of comfort and pleasurable sensations, the substitution of taste and culture for godliness, the cry of the preacher, Move us, move us! which by and by becomes, Tickle us, tickle us! Once more, there is the formation of worldly friendships and the entering into associations in which it is impossible to preserve the spirit of Christ. The injury done to piety by such associations and friendships is beyond calculation, both in extent and depth. Now, in whatever light men may regard this condition (and the world praises it, for the world loves its own), Christ is displeased and grieved with it. "I would," He says, "that thou wert cold or hot." Wilt thou not be so? That "would" is no unimpassioned word, as one might say, I should prefer it thus or thus: it is a sigh from the heart of distressed love; it carries Divine emotion in it, reminding us of that lamentation over Jerusalem, "I would—and ye would not." Thus the Lord makes it evident that He has no pleasure in this half-and-half condition. This is the Lord's judgment in the case: "I will spue thee out of My mouth." No doubt every believing soul in Laodicea would be saved in the day of the Lord, even though involved in the prevalent lukewarmness. But the Church would be rejected from being a Church. Lukewarmness unrepented of issues in rejection. It is in the history of the Church of Laodicea as a spiritual community that the fulfilment of the Lord's threatening is to be found; and the outward desolation is to be regarded only as the visible symbolism of a tremendous spiritual fact. (*J. Culross, D.D.*)

*An earnest warning against lukewarmness:—*1. THE STATE INTO WHICH CHURCHES ARE VERY APT TO FALL. 1. A Church may fall into a condition far other than that for which it has a repute. It may be famous for zeal, and yet be lethargic. The address of our Lord begins, "I know thy works," as much as to say, "Nobody else knows you. Men think better of you than you deserve. You do not know yourselves, you think your works to be excellent, but I know them to be very different." The public can only read reports, but Jesus sees for Himself. He knows what is done, and how it is done, and why it is done. 2. The condition described in our text is one of mournful indifference and carelessness. They were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good. 3. This condition of indifference is attended with perfect self-complacency. The people who ought to be mourning are rejoicing, and where they should hang out signals of distress they are flaunting the banners of triumph. What can a Church require that we have not in abundance? Yet their spiritual needs are terrible. Spiritually poor and proud. 4. This Church of Laodicea had fallen into a condition which had chased away its Lord. "I stand at the door and knock." That is not the position which our Lord occupies in reference to a truly flourishing Church. If we are walk-

ing aright with Him, He is in the midst of the Church, dwelling there, and revealing Himself to His people. II. THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE. 1. The great danger is, to be rejected of Christ. "I will spue thee out of My mouth." Churches are in Christ's mouth in several ways, they are used by Him as His testimony to the world, He speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. When God is with a people they speak with Divine power to the world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, "Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind." Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ's mouth. Then He also ceases to plead for such a Church. Mighty are His pleadings for those He really loves, and countless are the blessings which come in consequence. It will be an evil day when He casts a Church out of that interceding mouth. Do you not tremble at such a prospect? 2. Such a Church will be left to its fallen condition, to become wretched—that is to say, miserable, unhappy, divided, without the presence of God, and so without delight in the ways of God. III. THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LORD EMPLOYS. 1. Jesus gives a clear discovery as to the Church's true state. He says to it, "Thou art lukewarm, thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." I rejoice to see people willing to know the truth, but most men do not wish to know it, and this is an ill sign. We shall never get right as long as we are confident that we are so already. Self-complacency is the death of repentance. 2. Our Lord's next remedy is gracious counsel. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire." 3. Now comes a third remedy, sharp and cutting, but sent in love, namely rebukes and chastenings. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." 4. The best remedy for backsliding Churches is more communion with Christ. "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door and knock." This text belongs to the Church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean Church. There is Christ outside the Church, driven there by her unkindness, but He has not gone far away, He loves His Church too much to leave her altogether, He longs to come back, and therefore He waits at the doorpost. He knows that the Church will never be restored till He comes back, and He desires to bless her, and so He stands waiting and knocking. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The destiny of a lukewarm Church*:—I. THE COMPLAINT. 1. This complaint is made against the Church. We learn from this fact that Churches do become corrupt; they do decay. Keep, therefore, the Christ of God, who never will fail, or decay, exalted above the Church in your minds and hearts. 2. This complaint is made by One who can say, "I know." 3. This complaint is made by One who does know, and cannot misrepresent. 4. This complaint is made by One who does know, and cannot misrepresent, and who has a right to complain. Just let us see now what is meant by the lukewarmness complained of. The people had love for Christ, but it was not ardent. The people had charity among themselves, but it was not fervent. The people received spiritual blessings, but they did not thirst for them. The people wrought good works, but not zealously. The people prayed, but not fervently. They gave, but not liberally or cheerfully. The whole heart was not given to anything in connection with church life. Perhaps through the neglect of the means of preserving spiritual heat, or by using unwise means or false means, these people had become lukewarm, or perhaps by some besetting sin. 5. Now this complaint is based on works. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." One would have thought that "the Amen, the true and faithful Witness," would have said, "I know thy heart; I know thy spirit." The complaint is based on works, and not so much on general conduct as on labours of love. These were less than since their first profession. Oh, what a striking fact this is in church life! How thoroughly it reappears before the eye of every pastor. 6. See, the complaint is based on works, and it is made with evident feeling. Christ could not speak without feeling, far less could He complain without feeling. It is the want of feeling in the complaints that people make about Churches that so often distresses one. II. THE THREATENING. Any food or drink which ought to be either hot or cold is most unpleasant if lukewarm; and the strong language used here means, "I will reject thee." 1. This threatening is addressed, not to the individual, but to the Church. Christ presently turns to the individual, counselling him "to buy of Me gold." You cannot be in communion with Christ without being rebuked. Why? Because your faults and defects are continually coming out, and His love for you is such that He will not let them pass—He cannot let them pass. If, however, you be merely a nominal disciple, they will often pass unnoticed, and you will not hear a sound of rebuke from the skies until the day of final reckoning. 2. "The Amen" rejects the lukewarm Church. He rejects it—how? First, by

withdrawing His Spirit from it because such a Church is not His temple. And secondly, by not using it for the purposes of His kingdom. 3. Now, observe, in conclusion, that works are expected from a Christian Church, and the works of the Church show whether it be cold or hot. (*S. Martin.*) *Laodicea*:—I. THE LOVING REBUKE OF THE FAITHFUL WITNESS. The persons thus described are Christian people (for their Christianity is presupposed), with very little, though a little, warmth of affection and glow of Christian love and consecration. Further this defectiveness of Christian feeling is accompanied with a large amount of self-complacency. Then again, this deficiency of warmth is worse than absolute zero. "I would thou wert cold or hot." Because there is no man more hopeless than a man on whom the power of Christianity has been brought to bear, and has failed in warming and quickening him. Is that our condition? Look at the standard of Christian life round about us. Mark how wavering the line is between the Church and the world; how little upon our side of the line there is of conspicuous consecration and unworldliness: how entirely in regard of an enormous mass of professing Christians, the maxims that are common in the world are their maxims; and the sort of life that the world lives is the sort of life that they live. Look at your Churches and mark their feebleness, the slow progress of the gospel among them, the low lives that the bulk of professing Christians are living, and answer the question, is that the operation of a Divine Spirit that comes to transform and to quicken everything into His own vivid and flaming life? or is it the operation of our own selfishness and worldliness, crushing down and hemming in the power that ought to sway us? II. THE CAUSES OF THIS LUKEWARMNESS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. Of course the tendency to it is in us all. Take a bar of iron out of the furnace on a winter day, and lay it down in the air, and there is nothing more wanted. Leave it there, and very soon the white heat will change into livid dulness, and then there will come a scale over it, and in a short time it will be as cold as the frosty atmosphere around it. And so there is always a refrigerating process acting upon us, which needs to be counteracted by continual contact with the fiery furnace of spiritual warmth, or else we are cooled down to the degree of cold around us. But besides this universally operating cause there are many others which affect us. I find fault with no man for the earnestness which he flings into his business, but I ask you to say whether the relative importance of the things seen and unseen is fairly represented by the relative amount of earnestness with which you and I pursue these respectively. Then, again, the existence among us, or around us, of a certain widely diffused doubt as to the truths of Christianity is, illogically enough, a cause for diminished fervour on the part of the men that do not doubt them. That is foolish, and it is strange, but it is true. And there is another case, which I name with some hesitation, but which yet seems to me to be worthy of notice; and that is, the increasing degree to which Christian men are occupied with what we call, for want of a better name, secular things. I grudge the political world nothing that it gets of your strength, but I do grudge, for your sakes, as well as for the Church's sake, that so often the two forms of activity are supposed by professing Christians to be incompatible, and that therefore the more important is neglected, and the less important done. III. THE LOVING CALL TO DEEPENED EARNESTNESS. "Be zealous, therefore." Lay hold of the truth that Christ possesses a full store of all that you can want. Meditate on that great truth and it will kindle a flame of desire and of fruition in your hearts. "Be zealous, therefore." And again, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." "Be zealous, therefore." That is to say, grasp the great thought of the loving Christ, all whose dealings, even when His voice assumes severity, and His hand comes armed with a rod, are the outcome and manifestation of His love; and sink into that love, and that will make your hearts glow. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." "Be zealous, therefore." Think of the earnest, patient, long-suffering appeal which the Master makes, bearing with all our weaknesses, and not suffering His gentle hand to be turned away, though the door has been so long barred and bolted in His face. IV. THE MERCIFUL CALL TO A NEW BEGINNING. "Repent." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The danger of lukewarmness in religion*:—The soul of man is endowed with such active powers that it cannot be idle: and, if we look round the world, we see it all alive. What vigorous action, what labour and toil about the necessities of life, about riches and honours! But it is quite otherwise in religion. Only a few act as if they regarded religion as the most important concern of life. For look round you, the generality are very indifferent about it. They will not indeed renounce all religion entirely; they will make some little profession of religion; but it is a matter of indifferency with them, and they are but little con-

cerned about it; they are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. Now such a lukewarmness is an eternal solecism in religion; it is the most inconsistent thing imaginable: more so than avowed impiety; therefore, says Christ, "I would thou wert cold or hot"—i.e. "You might be anything more consistently than what you are. If you looked upon religion as a cheat, and openly rejected the profession of it, it would not be strange that you should be careless about it and disregard it in practice. But to own it true, and make a profession of it, and yet be lukewarm and indifferent about it, this is the most absurd conduct that can be conceived; for, if it be true, it is certainly the most important and interesting truth in all the world, and requires the utmost exertion of all your powers." There are some aggravations peculiar to the lukewarm professor that render him peculiarly odious; as—1. He adds the sin of a hypocritical profession to his other sins. 2. He adds the guilt of presumption, pride, and self-flattery, imagining he is in a safe state and in favour with God; whereas he that makes no pretensions to religion has no such umbrage for this conceit and delusion. 3. He is in the most dangerous condition, as he is not liable to conviction, nor so likely to be brought to repentance. 4. The honour of God and religion is more injured by the negligent, unconscientious behaviour of these Laodiceans, than by the vices of those who make no pretensions to religion; with whom therefore its honour has no connection. But to be more particular: let us take a view of a lukewarm temper in various attitudes, or with respect to several objects.

1. Consider who and what God is. He is the original uncreated beauty, the sum total of all natural and moral perfections, the origin of all the excellences that are scattered through this glorious universe; He is the supreme good, and the only proper portion for our immortal spirits. He also sustains the most majestic and endearing relations to us: our Father, our Preserver and Benefactor, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. Is such a Being to be put off with heartless, lukewarm services?

2. Is lukewarmness a proper temper towards Jesus Christ? Is this a suitable return for that love which brought Him down from His native paradise into our wretched world? Oh, was Christ indifferent about your salvation? Was His love lukewarm towards you?

3. Is lukewarmness and indifferency a suitable temper with respect to a future state of happiness or misery?

4. Let us see how this lukewarm temper agrees with the duties of religion. And as I cannot particularise them all, I shall only mention an instance or two. View a lukewarm professor in prayer. The words proceed no further than from your tongue: you do not pour them out from the bottom of your hearts; they have no life or spirit in them, and you hardly ever reflect upon their meaning. And when you have talked away to God in this manner, you will have it to pass for a prayer. But surely such prayers must bring down a curse upon you instead of a blessing: such sacrifices must be an abomination to the Lord (Prov. xv. 8). The next instance I shall mention is with regard to the Word of God. You own it Divine, you profess it the standard of your religion, and the most excellent book in the world. Now, if this be the case, it is God that sends you an epistle when you are reading or hearing His Word. How impious and provoking then must it be to neglect it, to let it lie by you as an antiquated, useless book, or to read it in a careless, superficial manner, and hear it with an inattentive, wandering mind! Ye modern Laodiceans, are you not yet struck with horror at the thought of that insipid, formal, spiritless religion you have hitherto been contented with?

1. Consider the difficulties and dangers in your way. You must be made new men, quite other creatures than you now are. And oh! can this work be successfully performed while you make such faint and feeble efforts?

2. Consider how earnest and active men are in other pursuits. Is religion the only thing which demands the utmost exertion of all your powers, and alas! is that the only thing in which you will be dull and inactive? (*S. Davies, M.A.*)

Lukewarmness:—I. WHAT IS LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION? It is not Christian moderation. There is the popular and not unfounded prejudice against extremes, a suspicion of too great zeal, too much enthusiasm. And so in the service and the worship of God people choose a middle course between those who are "very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts," and those who turn their backs upon Him. They would not like to think anything extravagant; and they prefer to follow public opinion as safest; and then they think they are letting their moderation be known unto all men. Yet, after all, when we come to scrutinise this spirit, it is not quite like moderation and sober-mindedness, and the Lord's carefulness not to offend the weak. It is much more like worldly-mindedness.

II. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF LUKEWARMNESS? 1. May we not put first, worldly prosperity, the intrusion of something else into the place which God once occupied, and which God alone ought to occupy in the affections?

2. Another cause is the frequency of little sins. Evil speaking, untruthfulness and exaggeration, outbreaks of temper, vanity, self-indulgence, these, freely indulged, show not only that religion has no real power in the heart, but relax the hold of conscience, lessen our confidence towards God, and so chill our love. 3. Then, again, we may mention dissipation of mind, occupation in so many pursuits that little or no time is allowed for undisturbed communion with God in prayer and meditation. We all find it difficult to keep our attention fixed upon God without distraction. But how much harder if we allow our hearts to be choked with the pleasures and cares of this world! And if we cannot find time to think about Him we certainly shall not have power to love Him first, perhaps not to love Him at all with anything that deserves the name of love. In other ways this dissipation of mind serves to produce lukewarmness. If we are too busy to fix our minds upon God we shall scarcely have time to pay much attention to ourselves. How should we manage that which requires so much resolution, so much abstraction from worldly things, strict self-examination? How should we accurately measure our gain and loss since the last solemn inquiry into our spiritual state? How ascertain where we stand before God? III. These are some of the causes, and some of the symptoms too—for it is impossible to keep them distinct—of lukewarmness. SOME OTHER SYMPTOMS may be mentioned. If you suffer yourself on every little pretext to shorten, or to omit, your devotions; if you care more about the fact of going through them than about the manner or the spirit in which you go through them; if, when you feel not altogether happy in your conscience towards God and man, you either neglect self-examination, or set about it in a slovenly way; if, when you have detected a fault in yourself, you are slow at reformation; if you act, day after day, without once sanctifying your motives and your actions to God; if you never aim at forming habits of obedience to His commandments; if you never attack any one particular sin; if you despise little things and daily opportunities; if you delight rather in thinking of the good you have done than of the good you have left undone, resting on the past rather than looking forward into the future; if you never care to have God in all your thoughts, and, by meditation at least, to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ, then I fear it must be said of you that you are lukewarm. IV. Would to God that we could as easily tell THE REMEDY as the disease. Try, then, if ever you feel your love growing cold, your faith less vivid, to quicken them by meditation on eternal truths, so as to saturate your minds with the conviction of their infinite importance. Fight against the cause of lukewarmness; against worldliness, self-indulgence, carelessness, habitual sins, however little they may seem, self-complacency in the past, the oppression of too many cares. That can be no duty which perils the soul. (*W. Mitchell, M.A.*) *Lukewarmness* :—I. AN EXPOSURE OF SOME OF THE DISGUSTFUL THINGS WHICH ARE FOUND IN LUKEWARM RELIGION. 1. A lukewarm religion is a direct insult to the Lord Jesus Christ. If I boldly say I do not believe what He teaches, I have given Him the lie. But if I say to Him, "I believe what Thou teachest, but I do not think it of sufficient importance for me to disturb myself about it," I do in fact more wilfully resist His word; I as much as say to Him, "If it be true, yet is it a thing which I so despise that I will not give my heart to it." 2. Bethink you, again, does the Lord Jesus deserve such treatment at your hands? and may He not well say of such hearts as ours, He would that we were "either cold or hot"? 3. The lukewarm Christian compromises God before the eyes of the world in all he does and says. The world sees a man who professes to be going to heaven, but he is travelling there at a snail's pace. He professes to believe there is a hell, and yet he has tearless eyes and never seeks to snatch souls from going into the fire. Let the minister be as earnest as ever he will about the things of God, the lukewarm Christian neutralises any effect the minister can produce, because the world will judge the Church not by the standard of the pulpit so much as by the level of the pew. And thus they say, "There is no need for us to make so much stir about it; these peculiar people, these saints, take it remarkably easy; they think it will all be well; no doubt we do as much as they do, for they do very little." 4. The Lord hateth lukewarmness, because wherever it is found it is out of place. There is no spot near to the throne of God where lukewarmness could stand in a seemly position. II. DISSUASIVES AGAINST LUKEWARMNESS. As Christians, you have to do with solemn realities; you have to do with eternity, with death, with heaven, with hell, with Christ, with Satan, with souls, and can you deal with these things with a cold spirit? Suppose you can, there certainly never was a greater marvel in the world, if you should be able to deal with them successfully. These things demand the whole man. And the day is coming when you

will think these things worthy of your whole heart. When you and I shall lie stretched upon our dying beds, I think we shall have to regret, above all other things, our coldness of heart. Ay, and there will be a time when the things of God will seem yet more real even than on the dying bed. I refer to the day when we shall stand at the bar of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The first stages of spiritual decline* :—If the Christian's progress may be likened to a steep and difficult ascent, we may compare his first beginnings of decline to the slow and doubtful motion of some heavy substance from which the force is removed which caused it to ascend, while the impetus is not yet gained which will shortly urge it down its headlong, unresisted course. Betwixt ceasing to mount upwards and beginning to fall back, there is an awful moment of suspense. Or, to use another illustration, when the tide has risen to its height there is still-water for a time, before the ebbing waves begin to retire. Just so with the business of the soul.

I. THE SIGNS OF LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION. 1. We may first describe the state to which the Lord refers in the message to Laodicea as a state of great spiritual insensibility. 2. Another symptom of lukewarmness in religion may be discovered in the influence which the opinions and the example of the world exert upon us. Why not preserve just so much of religion as will satisfy the meagre demands of a sleepy conscience, and yet enjoy the pleasures, and pursue with breathless haste the riches, of the world? The attempt is vain! 3. But, further, that Laodicean spirit which the text describes, betrays itself at length in a decay of zeal for God. Does it cause you but little sorrow that the Saviour of the world should still be an outcast from so large and fair a portion of His inheritance? Have you no bowels of mercies for a perishing world?

II. SOME OF THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH RENDER THIS LUKEWARM STATE SO DANGEROUS TO THE SOUL. 1. The first that strikes us arises from the very nature of spiritual religion. For it is a contest against a corrupt nature. All the natural aids are on the side of sin: the world and the flesh are banded in one common cause. So that to lose ground in religion is not merely to risk our souls by wasting those advantages we have gained, but, further, it is to arm our enemies; it is to give to them the advantages which we have lost: for the attractive power of sin increases as we approach it. 2. The danger of this state is increased by the circumstance that there is in it nothing which at first excites alarm. For it is not a lapse into open sin. It does not amount to a rejection of the gospel. After all, the lukewarm Christian, compared with the multitude, is a religious man. And all this serves to soothe and to quiet his conscience. (*J. B. Marsden, M.A.*) *The danger of lukewarmness* :—1. There seems to be more likelihood of repentance, where men are manifestly wrong, than where there is ever so small ground on which they flatter themselves that they are right. Conscience in the one case may be awakened more readily by God's ordinary dispensations of providence and grace, than in the other, where it is lulled by the fatal satisfaction of being no worse than the world in general, of being almost if not quite a Christian. 2. The absolutely cold are in one respect less hardened than the lukewarm. They have at least usually less familiarity with those means of grace, whose abuse is as sure to harden the heart as their right use is to melt and refine it. 3. A third reason why the faithful Witness might wish even that we were cold rather than lukewarm is, that in the latter case we do more signal disparagement to the grace He dispenses, to the gospel He has revealed. (*Canon Girdlestone.*) *The three stages of religious emotion* :—**I. THE HOT CONDITION.** Some degree of warmth is necessary for the commencement of a religious experience. In the earliest days, wherever the Word was preached, wherever it penetrated men's hearts, there was a rush of spiritual emotion, a glow of inspiration, an effervescence of feeling, a new, strange joy. This was the token of the Spirit's presence. And what was true at first is true still, because religious history is a history of commencements and recommencements. Science has taught us that heat and motion are interchangeable, that heat is but a mode or form of motion, and motion but a mode or form of heat. The heat of the furnace and boiler is turned into the motion of the engine; the heat produced by the food we eat is turned into the motion of our bodies. The sun's heat stored up in the coal measures becomes the motion of a thousand factories. So it is in the moral world. To start and to keep up motion, right action, zealous effort, painstaking and fruitful activity, you must have heat within the soul. You know the type of Christian men whose enthusiasm is always at a glow. It brightens, and sparkles, and runs over. They thaw you, they warm you, when you come near them. These are the men who seem to respond to every genial influence of God's Spirit. They have built the house of their

faith not merely on the good foundation, but they have been wise, and built it with a warm, bright exposure as well. The forces of evil and temptation are strong. You must, therefore, have ardent religious feeling; you must have the action, the sympathy, the way of looking at and speaking of things that come with such strong feeling; otherwise the young and trustful, the men full of keen, vigorous life, will be swept into some of those vortices of evil and be lost.

II. **THE COLD CONDITION.** There is, of course, in human nature a continual tendency to cool down. Like the earth's surface during the night, our hearts are incessantly raying off heat. People don't intend probably to be cold and insensible to the things of God, but their mental force is run off, and so they grow cold. But then, once coldness comes it propagates itself, it even justifies itself. Men permanently, steadily cold, men with the spiritual thermometer standing constantly at zero, take various lines. There is among those who still profess to be Christians what may be called an orthodox and a heterodox coldness. Orthodox coldness still preserves the form of its faith, though that faith, instead of being a living figure, is a mere marble effigy—a corpse. Heterodox coldness has readjusted its beliefs and considerably modified them. Cold tends to contract most things, and faith among the rest. When men become cold after this fashion they become incapable of high belief, the belief that transforms a man and brings him near to God. They narrow their horizon, and all the stars go out of their sky. Cold men are dangerous neighbours. They very soon draw off all the heat from us. Let a centre of ice once form in a pond, and if the water be undisturbed, in a few hours it is frozen over. If we wish to preserve our heat, we must take care what company we keep. Alas! for that icy chill that has settled over many a heart that once throbbed kindly and truly in the service of Christ and of humanity! Some of the cold men look like icebergs. The fact is, they are not icebergs; they are extinct volcanoes. They once glowed with deep subterranean fires, and a red-hot stream of energy poured down the mountain-side. Now, there is only a collection of sulphur and ashes and crusted lava cakes.

III. **THE LUKEWARM CONDITION.** Lukewarmness is a stage of cooling down. No soul stops short at this stage. The heart leaps at once into fire and life. But it chills gradually. A lukewarm man you cannot describe. He is a mere collection of negations. His soul is like a reservoir or bath, into which streams of hot water and cold are being run at the same time, and you cannot tell which current is stronger, for they are often about equally strong. A lukewarm man has force, but it never moves him to any definite action. He has sympathies, but they tend to evaporate. He thinks, on the whole, he is a good, a religious man, on the side of Christ and of right. Other people are, on the whole, not quite sure what side he is on. The lukewarm man does not make it a principle to confine his religion to the four walls of the church, and the two boards of the Bible. He holds that it should not be so confined. And so he carries a few scraps of it into his daily life. He knows that prayer should not be an empty form, so he occasionally tries to pray inwardly and sincerely—that is, when he is neither very tired nor very busy. He has never given way on a question of principle, except when he was very hard pushed, or it appeared that very few people were looking on: and he has really often regretted giving way at all. He does not intend to do it again. A lukewarm man generally does a little Christian work, not, of course, enough to involve any sacrifice or exhaustion, nor would he take any pains to provide a substitute for occasional or even frequent absence. It is only genuine workers who do that. The lukewarm person has made a great many vows in the matter of religion in the course of his or her life—too many, in fact. It would have been better to have made fewer and kept some.

IV. **CHRIST'S VERDICT ON THESE STAGES OF RELIGIOUS EMOTION.** He regards it best to be hot, next best to be cold, worst of all to be lukewarm. Two or three reasons may be suggested. 1. There is, first, its unreality. Lukewarmness is a sort of imposture or sham. It is neither one thing nor another; and in a world that is sternly real, things and persons ought to have a definite character. Lukewarmness is the absence of character. It perplexes an outsider, and often imposes on a man himself. 2. Then it is useless. It has really no place in the order of things. 3. Further, it is a very impracticable state. You don't know how to deal with it. 4. Lastly, it is a dangerous state. It is more difficult to treat a man in a low fever than to treat a man who is sharply unwell. Lukewarmness tends not to get hotter, but to get colder. There is really more hope for a man who is cold outright. He is not blinding himself. He is not playing with truths. He knows he is cold. As a rule it is only when lukewarmness has died down into coldness that a change for the better comes. A man loses all, or almost

all, religious life and interest, and then he starts to find himself thus dead, and turns in penitence and fear to Christ. (*John F. Ewing, M.A.*) *Lukewarmness in religion*.—I. THE TEMPER WHICH OUR LORD REPROVES IN THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA. 1. They are lukewarm who are at no pains to guard against error, and to acquire just sentiments of religion. 2. They are lukewarm who, from worldly hopes or fears, detain in unrighteousness the truth they know, and who will not profess it openly. 3. They are lukewarm who give God the body, but withhold from Him the soul. 4. The inactivity of professed Christians is a strong proof that they are lukewarm. 5. Many discover their lukewarmness by the limitations within which they confine their obedience, or by the weakness of their religious affections, when compared with their affections to worldly objects. 6. They are lukewarm who are little affected with the advancement or the decay of religion, or with that which concerns the common welfare of mankind. II. WHY A LUKEWARM SPIRIT SO WOEFULLY PREVAILS AMONG MANY WHO PROFESS TO BELIEVE THE RELIGION OF JESUS. Lukewarmness prevails through an evil heart of unbelief. Men imagine that they believe the threatenings of the law and the promises of the gospel, who have never considered either their interesting nature or their undoubted certainty. Strangers they must be to holy fervour of spirit who see not the beauty and glory, and who relish not the pleasures of religion; who talk of treasures in heaven, but view the treasures of this earth as more desirable; and who fondly cherish a secret hope that God will be less severe on transgressors than the language of His threatenings supposes. The want of religious principles, ill-founded and presumptuous hopes, and that lukewarmness which flows from both, are greatly promoted by bad education and by bad example. The ordinary commerce of the world completes the ruin which education had begun. The conversation and manners of those whom the young are taught to love, or whose superior age and wisdom they respect, completely pervert their ideas, their resolutions, and their conduct. III. THE FOLLY, GUILT, AND DANGER OF THIS LUKEWARM TEMPER. 1. The lukewarm practically deny the excellence and the importance of religion. 2. A lukewarm religion answers no valuable purpose. 3. The temper and conduct of the lukewarm is peculiarly base and criminal. (1) It argues the vilest ingratitude. (2) It indicates hypocrisy. (3) The man who is lukewarm disgraces the worthy name by which he is called. 4. The lukewarm are not reclaimed without great difficulty, and they are always waxing worse and worse, whether it is pride, or self-deceit, or gross hypocrisy which chiefly prevails in their characters. 5. Lukewarmness exposes men to the dreadful effects of God's vengeance in temporal judgments, in spiritual plagues, and in eternal destruction. (*John Erskine, D.D.*) *Lukewarmness*.—No one can help admiring a straightforward, honourable course, and when the world says of a man that he is "sitting on the fence," it is hardly considered as a compliment. I. The first alarming symptom of the existence of lukewarmness is a GROWING INATTENTION TO THE PRIVATE DUTIES OF RELIGION. II. Another evidence of the encroachments of lukewarmness is CARELESSNESS IN ATTENDING PUBLIC WORSHIP. III. A third symptom of lukewarmness, about which there can be no possible mistake is AN INDIFFERENCE CONCERNING THE BENEVOLENT ENTERPRISES OF THE DAY, AND SCANT OFFERINGS FOR THEIR FURTHERANCE. The world has an eagle eye for anything inconsistent, and nothing disgusts it more than lukewarmness in those who claim to be followers of Christ. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Indifference*.—The besetting sin of that ancient Church of Asia was lukewarmness, half-hearted indifference. It is the besetting sin among us to-day. "I don't care," are words more commonly spoken among us than, "I don't believe." A careless, or idle, or even vicious boy at school may be reclaimed, but one who takes no interest in his work is a hopeless case. Look at some of the results of being indifferent about religion. 1. It makes our religion unreal. It is not the love of God which constrains us, but fashion, or custom. Our religion is like a spurious coin, good enough to look on, but when tried it does not ring true. 2. Next, indifference makes people ignorant of the teachings of the Church, they are often unacquainted with the very A B C of Christianity. 3. Again, this lukewarm indifference makes people selfish and idle. The idea of making any sacrifice for Christ's sake is not in their thoughts. 4. But above all, this lukewarm indifference leads to a shallow view of sin. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Lukewarmness injurious to others*.—One lukewarm Christian may do untold harm to a whole Church. Pour a quantity of tepid water into a vessel that contains boiling water, and immediately the temperature of the whole will sink. Just so the contact of men who are indifferent with those who are fervid, deadens their fervour, and tends to reduce them to the same lukewarmness. (*G. Bowes.*)

Vers. 17, 18. **Knowest not that thou art wretched.**—*A great mistake, and the way to rectify it:*—These Laodicean people were unhappily in such a state that you could not get at them. They were not so poor that they knew they were poor, and therefore when the poverty-stricken were addressed, they said, "These things are not for us: we are increased in goods." They were blind, but they thought they saw; they were naked, and yet they prided themselves on their princely apparel, and hence it was hard to reach them. Had they even been outwardly worse, had they defiled their garments with overt transgression, then the Spirit might have pointed out the blot and convicted them there and then; but what was to be done when the mischief was hidden and internal? I. First, let us think of the Church in Laodicea and listen to THEIR SAYING; it may prevent us from reaching such a height of pride as to speak as they did. 1. The spirit of self-congratulation expressed itself in a manner strikingly unanimous. It was the general, unanimous feeling, from the minister down to the latest convert, that they were a most wonderful Church. They were heartily at one in having a high estimate of themselves, and this helped to keep them together, and stirred them to attempt great things. 2. This saying of theirs was exceedingly boastful. The present was all right, the past was eminently satisfactory, and they had reached a point of all but absolute perfection, for they needed nothing. 3. They were sincere in this glorying. When they said it they were not consciously boasting, for the text says, "And thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They did not know the truth. How readily do we believe a lie when it fosters in us a high opinion of ourselves. 4. But now see what was their actual state: they were altogether mistaken. These intelligent persons, these wealthy persons, these instructed persons did not know themselves, and that is the grossest kind of ignorance. You remember the Tay Bridge disaster. There is no doubt whatever that the bridge was not fitted for its position, its ordinary strain was all it could bear; but nobody thought so. Undoubtedly the engineers reckoned it would stand any test to which it might be put, and therefore there was no attention given to it to make it any stronger and to provide against sudden disaster; and consequently when a specially fierce hurricane was out one night it swept it all away. That is just the picture of many a Church and many a man, because he is thought to be so pious, and the Church is thought to be so correct and vigorous, therefore no attempt is made for improvement, no special prayer, no cries to heaven. II. OUR LORD'S BLESSED COUNSEL. 1. Note how He begins: "I counsel thee to buy." Is not that singular advice? Just now He said that they were "wretched" and "poor." How can they buy? Surely it suggests to us at once those blessed free grace terms which are only to be met with in the market of Divine love: "Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." 2. But next, what does He say? "I counsel thee to buy of Me." Ah, they had been dealing with one another: they had been bartering amongst themselves. One brother had brought this talent, another that, and they had grown rich, as they thought, by a mutual commerce. "Now," says Christ, "compare yourselves with yourselves no longer: give up seeking of man, and buy of Me." It is the very foundation of grace—to be willing to buy of Christ. 3. Now see the goods which He describes. "I counsel thee to buy of Me"—what? Everything. It is true that only three wants of these people are here mentioned, but they are inclusive of all needs. 4. The counsel of the Lord is not only that we buy of Him everything, but that we buy the best of everything of Him. Gold is the most precious metal, but He would have them buy the best of it, "gold tried in the fire"; gold that will endure all further tests, having survived that of fire. Remember the raiment too, for that is of the best; our Lord calls it "white raiment." That is a pure colour, a holy colour, a royal colour. We put on the Lord Jesus as our joy, our glory, our righteousness. And as to the eyesalve, it is the best possible one, for Jesus says, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see." 5. All this is the counsel of Christ, and the counsel of Christ to a people that were proud and self-conceited. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The self-ignorance of the Laodiceans:*—The secret of lukewarmness is disclosed in these words, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Shall we find fault with the words in themselves? Might they not be taken as an expression of gratitude? Might they not mean, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"? Now I would not deny that this may have been meant by the Laodiceans as the language of very exalted piety. Possibly, too, their neighbours might admit the claim, and regard them with admiration. But when we look

closely into the words, two unpleasant things appear. First, here is no recognition of the Lord and His goodness; no lowly and grateful ascribing of all to His undeserved lovingkindness and bounty. If the Laodiceans had felt themselves debtors, they would at least have said, "By the grace of God I am what I am"—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory." This second thing, too, becomes apparent, in examining the words, that they are a boast; a glorying in self, and not in the Lord; a quiet claim of superiority over other Churches; like the words of the Pharisee, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." Their wretched and pitiable condition is presented to themselves in three aspects: as poverty, blindness, and nakedness. What a combination of ills! If you find a fellow-man in this plight, how you commiserate him. Each evil more than doubles the other. And then add inevitable nakedness—with its shamefulfulness and discomforts—and how woeful the condition! Well, here is a Church of Christ in that pitiable condition. There is material wealth, growing numbers, name and repute in society, many showy and coveted virtues that attract attention and admiration. But look for the faith, the love, the joy, the peace, the hope, the meekness, the piety, the holy zeal, the beneficence, the martyr-spirit, the self-forgetfulness and self-denial, in which the true wealth of a Church consists, and she has nothing. Inquire how much of heaven there is within her borders—how much of the power and joy of the Holy Ghost—and you discover that in the real, true sense she is bankrupt. This Church is "blind" as well as poor—blind in the eye that sees God. They said, "We see," and believed it. But enter the region of spiritual truths and realities—bring up the doctrines of the gospel and the hidden wisdom, comparing spiritual things with spiritual—they are foolishness to the Laodiceans, neither can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If spiritual poverty in a Christian Church is sinful, so also is blindness. It is not misfortune, but fault. It need not be. The Saviour was anointed with the Holy Spirit that He might give sight to the blind, and He has lost none of His skill. One thing more characterises this Laodicean Church: instead of the rich and glorious adorning of thy fancy, "thou art naked." Grace clothes the happy soul with the garment of salvation, and covers it with the robe of righteousness, so that we appear with acceptance in the presence of the majesty of heaven and earth; but Laodicea in its pride is naked as a beggar. And saddest of all, "thou knowest it not": it is hidden from thine eyes. Could aught be more deplorable? (*J. Culross, D.D.*) *The Church of the Laodiceans*:—I. THE OPINION WHICH THE LAODICEANS HELD OF THEMSELVES. "Thou sayest." It is not likely that the words which follow were spoken. The saying was in a cherished thought—not in a thought that comes in, if I may so speak, at one door of the spirit and passes out at another, but a thought that a man makes at home in his mind. He who speaks to the Laodiceans, hears this speaking; though the speaking be only thinking, He hears it; though only in feeling, He hears it. Oh, what a different thing life would be, if lived out under the eye of God, from what it now is as lived out under the eye of men! But, mark, every Church presents itself in a particular form to Jesus Christ. Every Church by its worship and communion and fellowship and work is, according to this text, saying something perpetually into the very ear of God. Now these people said, "I am rich"—rich not in material wealth, though that most likely was true. And they said, "I am increased with goods": that is, I am become wealthy. There is a force in the word that gives the idea of their having gained this spiritual treasure by their own exertions, so that it was to their credit to have been thus spiritually rich. "And have need of nothing"; that is, they were perfectly satisfied. You see there is a sort of climax here: rich—become rich—having need of nothing. First the fact of wealth is stated, then the means by which it was obtained is indicated, and then the result. But now, what does all this mean in plain language? Christ intends to say to these people, that they were self-conceited and self-sufficient. The men who are great in their own eyes are men who have very little to do with God, and very little to do with the works of God; and the Christians and the Churches that are great in their own eyes are Christians and Churches that cannot be much in communion with Christ. II. THEIR REAL CONDITION, AS DESCRIBED BY ONE WHO KNEW IT WELL. "And knowest not that thou art wretched"—literally, "that thou art the wretched one"—the wretched one out of these Asiatic Churches—the wretched one in all the Churches of Christ. The Laodicean Church thought itself to be the great one; and, to correct them, Christ is represented as saying, "and knowest not that thou art the wretched one." A slave to vanity and to delusion, this Church was verily the wretched and the

pitiable one, a true object for compassion. III. THE COUNSEL. It is just the same with a man who professes to cultivate his mind, to increase his knowledge, and to add to his information—so soon as he begins to rest in what he has gained, and to call it wealth, and to feel rich in it, so soon he arrests his progress in getting to himself the treasures of information and of knowledge. This counsel, I say again, is offered to those who assume and assert that they do not need it. But what is here meant by the word “buy”?—“I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire.” The word “buy” here does not mean to give an equivalent, but to part with this self-sufficiency, and to part with it for something valuable. We often see God bring a conceited man down to no faith at all in order to lift him up to the position of a true believer. What Christ suggests to these people is this, that they shall part with their self-conceit and with their self-sufficiency. By this “gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich,” we may understand sterling godliness as opposed to “the form of godliness without the power.” Of what use is a sham Christian? Of what benefit is an unreal Church? Things are precious only as they be true and thorough and entire. “And white raiment that thou mayest be clothed,” &c. Put into plain language, this simply means, get what is really valuable; put on what is really fair and true; and try to see things by a proper and spiritual discernment to be derived from above just as they really are. (*S. Martin.*) *Shallowness in religion*:—Setting aside for a little the question what this lukewarmness or shallowness is, in the higher spiritual life of the soul, we are all of us perfectly well acquainted with those whose characters it marks in common life—shallow, surface, outside men. We see it in one man in the life of the affections. He is full of a ready, courteous, skin-deep kindness of demeanour, which reaches down to no self-sacrifice, which implies no wearing anxiety for others, which reveals no deep, disturbing love, perhaps, for any one person upon the earth, nay, which perhaps is thoroughly compatible with absolute cruelty of heart. This character is one of utter shallowness; it is marked by an essential poverty in the life of the affections. They are called up by the lightest surface-touch, because to them the surface is all. They are mere land-springs of kindness, easy to break out after a summer shower, easy to dry up after a twelve hours’ drought. It is demonstration without depth, the brook of shallow love, babbling of its shallowness as it flows. Here is one of these shallow characters: now look at it from another point, and see it in the life of science. See the poor sciolist, with his ready smattering of all learning, veiling even from himself his universal ignorance. For what worth knowing does the man know? His readiness to acquire and his readiness to produce are of the very essence of his disease. Again, you may see the self-same character in the public man. He is the easy repeater of the watchwords of a party, the retailer of other men’s aphorisms, the uncomprehending inheritor of a traditional policy. There is not in this man, perhaps, one atom of real knowledge, one acting of any deep principle which could govern, could strengthen, or could ennoble a public life. Here, then, in the ordinary life of this world—having put for the time the higher spiritual world aside—here is this familiar phase of shallowness. And now, how is it to be cured? How are we ourselves to get free from it? We must trace the cause of the evil. The master root of this vice is the selfishness of our fallen nature, working under the peculiar circumstances which belong to ease, to abundance, and to a refined civilisation. Men shaken daily together in the vast sack of common respectabilities round off from one another the sharp corners of their individuality, and thus the curse of shallowness is imparted, like some contagious disorder, from one to another; and all combine to banish, as the source of continual trouble, from their life of painted complacency, deeper and more real qualities. Here is the working of the evil and its cause; and now where is the cure to come from? Wealth cannot buy it; civilisation cannot give it; intellectual power cannot command it. Where then is the cure against all this degradation of humanity? In the Church of Christ, and in it alone, is stored the sufficient remedy. The Lord imparts Himself to the soul that will receive Him. This is the new life of the regenerate. This is the mystery of the new birth in its perfection, in the soul that follows after Christ. And so the shallownesses of his nature are swept away by the mighty burst; the rock is struck and the streams flow, and those whom the Lord has healed, witness of that healing to others. The emptiness of fallen man is filled full by the awful in-dwelling of the Incarnate God. “I counsel thee to buy of Me.” And what is needed to buy of Him? First, you must believe in the reality of the renewed life. How many fail here! They live in the perpetual dream that for the

present they *must* be shallow, instead of believing in the mighty enfranchisement which the Eternal Son has wrought out for them. Oh, claim it for thyself, and claim it here. Next, join in desire, join in prayer, join in perpetual aspiration, your present life to the life of Christ. This is the great sacramental mystery of our new being. By the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ will work daily within you, if you will seek His working. Only thirdly, seek all this not as a mere apprehension of the understanding, for that will do no good, but seek it as part of a renewed life. Seek it in a life of greater brightness and greater obedience in service. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*)

*The great and dangerous mistake of some professors:—*All flattery is dangerous; self-flattery is more dangerous; but self-flattery in the business of salvation, is the most dangerous of all. I. THAT THERE ARE MULTITUDES OF SUCH SELF-DECEIVERS AMONG PROFESSORS. II. THE GROUNDS AND CAUSES OF THIS SELF-DECEIT AMONG PROFESSORS. 1. The natural deceitfulness of the heart, than which nothing is more treacherous and false (Jer. xvii. 9). 2. Satan is a chief conspirator in this treacherous design. 3. The common works found in unregenerate souls deceive many, who cannot distinguish them from the special works of the Spirit in God's elect (Heb. vi. 4). 4. To add no more, this strengthens self-deceit exceedingly in many, viz., their observations of and comparing themselves with others. Use 1. I shall be for caution to professors. Before I tell you what use you should make of it, I must tell you what use you may not make of it. (1) Do not make this use of it—to conclude from what hath been said, that all professors are but a pack of hypocrites. (2) Do not make this use of it—that assurance must needs be impossible, because so many professors are found to be self-deceivers. (3) Do not make this use of it—to conceal or hide the truths or graces of God, or refuse to profess or confess them before men, because many professors deceive themselves and others also by a vain profession. Use 2. Surely you cannot improve this point to a better purpose than from it to take warning, and look to yourselves, that you be not of that number who deceive themselves in their profession. (*John Flavel.*)

*The unconverted sinner's estimate of himself:—*I. THE UNCONVERTED SINNER'S ESTIMATE OF HIS OWN CONDITION. 1. "I am rich." The word "rich" is here used in its most extended meaning, as descriptive of the possession of that which is of great value. "I am rich." I possess much; and what I possess is well worth having. If the unconverted sinner has money, he is proud of it. He looks upon it as a great portion. But many of the unconverted have no money to be proud of. That circumstance, however, does not prevent them from finding out that they are rich. Perhaps they have respectable family connections, or they have a goodly personal appearance, or they possess superior talents. In any such case, the mind fastens with special complacency upon the circumstance, and feels all the satisfaction attendant upon the consciousness of being rich. 2. "And increased with goods." These words embody an additional conceit of the unconverted man. He is rich, and his wealth is not in the course of decay; on the contrary, it is rising in its amount, it is accumulating fast. If he is a young man, he, peradventure, rejoices in the rapid growth and extensive range of his literary and scientific and professional acquirements, and his heart bounds within him as the strong hope arises of approaching distinction and fame. See, again, that man who has left behind him the gay period of youth, and has arrived at the years of maturity and wisdom. He is no longer what he once was. The fire of passion is moderated, and the grosser immoralities of early life are abandoned. From being a person of no character, he is become a person of good character. He is a prudent, a well-behaved, an honourable citizen. 3. "And have need of nothing." In these words we are presented with the unconverted man's climax. The prosperity of his state has arrived at the superlative degree. II. THE UNCONVERTED SINNER'S REAL STATE. 1. "He is wretched." Consider the original state of mankind. Think of its enjoyments, its privileges, its honours, its prospects. What a happy condition! and how wretched the condition which has succeeded! They might be free, but instead of that they are slaves to Satan, to the world, to their own lusts. They might be noble princes; but, alas! they are disgraced outcasts from the Divine favour. They might be kings and priests unto God; but they are doomed criminals, the branded victims of coming vengeance. Surely they are in a wretched condition; they have the Almighty Potentate of heaven and earth for their foe. 2. "Miserable." It is intimated here, that when the mind comes to the consideration of the state of the unconverted, the appropriate emotion is pity. The thralldom they are held in calls for pity; the forfeiture they have incurred, the doom they have provoked, the self-deception they are practising, the false security they are indulging, the infatuation they are exemplifying, demand our pity. 3. "Poor."

If the tattered garment around the body be recognised as the symbol of poverty surely we have the symbol of a deeper poverty when the soul is enveloped in the unclean rags of self-righteousness! 4. "Blind." Sinai overhangs him, but he heeds not the frowning mountain. One fairer than the sons of men, and chief among ten thousand, appears to him; but he evinces no sense of His attractions. The deformities of sin do not hinder him from embracing it. Though it be the noon-day of the Gospel, he gropes as one in darkness. The road which he travels is marked for his warning, as the way to everlasting misery and ruin, but he slackens not his pace. Can it be, then, that he sees? Would beauty have no power to draw a man, deformity none to repel him, or dangers to dismay him, unless he were blind? 5. "Naked." This completes the picture of an unconverted state. The unconverted are naked in a two-fold respect—in that they want the garment of justification, and likewise the garment of sanctification. III. SOME INFERENCES DESCRIPTIVE OF THE UNCONVERTED MAN'S ERROR. 1. It is a great error. It is just as great an error as possibly can be. It is not, for example, the error of the man who says it is an hour before noon, or an hour after noon, when it is actually just noon; but it is the error of him who declares it is midnight while he stands under the blaze of the meridian sun. 2. It is a surprising error. It is surprising from its very grossness. Man is so prone to err that the occurrence of small mistakes excites no astonishment; on the contrary, we look for it. But it is startling to find men calling bitter sweet, emptiness abundance, disgrace honour, and misery comfort and happiness. The error in question is the more extraordinary, when it is considered that there are such ample means of getting at the truth. 3. It is a pernicious error. Death is the consequence of adhering to this error—death in its most appalling form—the eternal ruin of body and soul. 4. It is an error which, by human means, is incorrigible. We say not that its correction is beyond the power of God. (*A. Gray.*) *Human need*:—Man is by nature the neediest of all beings. Nor is it, as some might maintain, his disgrace and the signal of his inferiority that he is thus needy, but rather the mark of his native glory and pre-eminence. For it points to the number and greatness of his faculties. The lower the creature, the less his need; for the more feeble his sensibilities, narrow his powers, and torpid his desires. But, from the most sagacious and strongest of the animal tribes, how vast the difference, in capacity of intellect and feeling, to man! And no less vast the difference of need. He draws from the earth, from the water, and from the air, to satisfy his appetites and to satiate his curiosity; he ransacks every kingdom of nature for his comfort and aggrandisement, and is not content. Is there, then, no satisfaction for a man? God has not made His noblest creature for a wretched failure and a miserable want. Let him bring into light all his abilities and desires—they are not too many or too strong; those of the higher nature as well as the lower; those that tend up to God Himself and heaven and immortality, as well as those that tend downwards and abroad to earthly things. Let him unfold them without fear. The vast supplies from the foreseeing Creator, in the treasury of His truth, are ready. Let him appropriate them to his need. Man is a being that does not need daily bread and clothing and shelter alone; but he needs truth, needs duty, needs love, needs God. The mistake is in trying to gratify fully his nature with such outward things, neglecting the spiritual. It is just this foolhardy and hazardous assurance of satisfaction in outward prosperity, that I apprehend, the author of our text means to expose. Man—whosoever thou art, content with sensual good and clinging to outward treasure—that is not the true gold with which thou fillest thy coffers. That is not the durable raiment with which thou art clad. There are riches of goodness for the heart. To sustain this exhortation, it is not necessary to speak in the exclusive ardour of one idea, but the sober proportion that takes in man's whole estate. He needs, by various education, to get possession of all his members and faculties. He needs to fabricate, needs to manufacture, needs to discover and invent, needs to trade, needs to accumulate; so that every industrial faculty may be brought out, every hand employed, every talent put in motion—nay, so that the community itself may not fail, but be civilised. In setting before you a moral and spiritual need, I certainly do not forget these personal, social, and political necessities, nor would shove them by an inch from their place; but, admitting the latter, maintain the supreme importance, the predominating position of the former. The dull caterpillar may be content with lying upon the ground, hardly appearing animated, like a lump or brown leaf, when the wings are actually folded up within, to bear it into the sunshine and among all the blossoms of the landscape. So a man may be content with a low, earth-bound life, a state of half-manhood, because unconscious of

the heaven-bestowed capacities by which he might live above the world. But the mere force of nature will not unfold the man as it does the insect. He may discourage and keep down these wings of the soul. He may, by sin and his rebellious will, wound and mutilate them as they instinctively strive to expand. Yet he cannot remain for ever unconscious of their existence. He cannot exercise them in the mean ways of the world in which he treads. Lacking their true element and use, they will pine and wither with dissatisfaction and remorse. We need the principle of devotion to God and others' good. We need the practice of the two great commandments of love to God and man. We need to be humble, need to be patient, need to be meek, to the Father above and our brethren below. We need these dispositions, not only as paying our debt to them, though they are our debt, but as the indispensable requisites of our own well-being. (C. A. Bartol.)

Moral wealth:—I. MORAL WEALTH IS MOST FOREIGN TO THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS. In morals, the richer a man thinks himself to be, the poorer he is. Pharisaic souls are in utter destitution. II. MORAL WEALTH IS THE GREAT WANT OF HUMANITY. Men, whatever else they possess, are abject without it. 1. It is the only wealth that is intrinsically valuable. 2. The only wealth that enriches the man. 3. The only wealth that procures an honourable status in being. 4. The only wealth that secures a true and lasting interest in the universe. III. MORAL WEALTH IS TO BE OBTAINED ONLY IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST. Jesus has "the gold," "the white garment," the eyesalve," the "unsearchable riches." IV. MORAL WEALTH MUST BE OBTAINED BY PURCHASE. "Buy of Me." You must give up something for it—ease, self-righteousness, prejudices, worldly gain and pleasures. You must sell that you have. (Homilist.)

The spiritually luxurious and proud:—What is the condition of the individual Christian (so called) who is represented in the Laodicean Church? Is not this a description of one who is spiritually luxurious and proud? Do not confound the spiritually luxurious with the temporally luxurious. One spiritually luxurious Christian may be a man poor in this world's goods. He may be the farthest removed from the world's luxury. He may wear hair-cloth and walk with bare feet. His outward condition has nothing to do with his spiritual state. His supposed riches, his increase of goods, his need of nothing—all refer to his spiritual condition. He thinks he is full of the Divine life. He is one of the Lord's favourites. He serenely looks down upon mankind from the high level of a spiritual nobility. He takes his delicious ease amid his good thoughts of himself, and has a lofty scorn for the common herd of Christians. He may be an observer of forms. He may go to church. He may bow his head reverently. He may even enter a brotherhood and take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; or, on the other hand, he may be a neglecter of all public worship—*above* all the means of grace. They are good enough for the crowd, but he has no need of them. In either case he considers himself a model Christian, and never thinks of applying to himself any of the Divine rebukes for shortcomings and inconsistency. You have often seen such. They are very varied in their earthly conditions, and also in their mode of exhibiting their conceit, but they all have the same satisfaction with themselves. 1. They are spiritually poverty-stricken. The spiritual wealth consisting of appreciation of the Divine promises, close communion with God, and the glorious visions of hope and faith, is altogether lacking. The wealth of sympathy and helpfulness, the wealth of energy for Christ and His salvation, has no representation in them. 2. They are spiritually naked. The grateful sense of indebtedness to a gracious Saviour, melting the soul and humbling it before Him, has never been felt. 3. They are spiritually blind. That is why they do not detect their nakedness. That is why they do not know their coin is all spurious and their wealth but poverty. (H. Crosby.)

What does God think of me?—A young lady of thoughtful turn of mind once said to the late Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol, "Doctor, what do you think of God?" For a while the doctor was silent, and then, with great solemnity and pathos, he replied, "My dear, it is not what I think of God, but what does God think of me." *What we are before God*:—The Laodiceans said, "We are rich and have need of nothing," but God said, "Thou art poor and wretched and miserable." In the old tombs of our cathedrals there were frequently two figures on the monuments, one of the deceased king, or knight, or bishop, resting above in his full robes of state as he wore them abroad in life, and another beneath a thin, emaciated skeleton, which recalled to the eyes of the beholder the realities of the grave below. It is well to have in thought this double image of ourselves, what we are before the world, and what we are before God. (Free Methodist.)

Poor and needy:—Dr. T. L. Cuyler tells us that when the richest American of his day was in

his last fatal sickness, a Christian friend proposed to sing to him; and the hymn he named was, "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy." "Yes, yes," replied the dying millionaire, "sing that to me; I feel poor and needy." Yet at that moment the stock markets of the globe were watching and waiting for the demise of the man who could shake them with a nod of his head. **I counsel thee to buy of Me.**—*Christ giving counsel*:—Looked at broadly, these words intimate that the Lord has not given them up, however desperate their condition. To the hearing ear they sound like this, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help." It will be found that the grace of Christ meets the Laodiceans at every point. Knowing their poverty, the Lord offers to provide them with true and durable riches—gold bright from the fire. The fire-purged gold represents those spiritual possessions in which the true wealth of a Church consists. What shall we count in under this head? Light is thrown on the question by what we are told (2 Cor. viii. 1-5) concerning the Churches of Macedonia. They were marked by "deep poverty," but that poverty was conjoined with "abundance of joy"—the joy of the Holy Ghost, which had never failed them since they embraced the gospel; that joy of theirs was "gold." Again, even in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality; that liberality of theirs was "gold." Again, there was the outflow of love to their suffering brethren in Christ at a distance; they were willing to contribute to their help, even beyond their power: that love was "gold." A Church that is rich in these things is rich indeed. Besides being poor, the Laodiceans were naked. So He invites them to make application to Him, and promises to give "white raiment," &c. This represents and symbolises the saintliness of life in which saintliness of heart expresses itself. As the dress clothes the body, and answers to its form and size, so a saintly life is the garb, as it were, and expression of a holy heart. The "well-doing" in which we are not to be "weary" is not the mere doing of what is "good," but of what is "beautiful"; and beauty of living is the outward of heart-beauty, as a smile is the outward of heart-cheer. Besides being poor and naked, they were blind; answering to the prophet's description of "the blind people who have eyes," or like those men who appealed to Jesus with the question, "Are we blind also?" Now we must settle it in our hearts that we can find what we need only in Christ, and nowhere else. "Buy," He says, "of Me." We must not merely look away from man, we must also look away from ourselves to Him. There is a peculiar and very delightful emotion produced in the mind by fine scenery; almost every one, I suppose, knows what it is. You sit in a room which commands one of the finest views in the country. Your face, however, as it happens, is turned away from the window. You shut your eyes and strive to call up the peculiar emotion to which I have referred. Of course you fail. All the striving in the world would be in vain. What, then? Rise from your chair, open your eyes, step to the window, gaze forth upon the scene outspread before you, and let it produce its own effect upon your mind. In like manner, in religion, we shall not succeed in getting the right feeling by our trying and striving, we must look out of ourselves to Christ. (*J. Culross, D.D.*) *Jesus, the heavenly counsellor*:—Uncertainty and doubt will make themselves felt in the history of all who have the journey of life to accomplish. We cannot wonder, then, that in the present day so many guides should present themselves, all professedly eager to help us in our great uncertainties. **I. THE COUNSEL JESUS GIVES.** 1. Jesus counsels us what we are to believe. The faculty of belief is as certainly possessed by man as is the faculty of vision; the one is a physical and the other a mental power, but both are possessed by us, and both are to be exercised. Jesus says, "I counsel thee what to believe." To believe in God, in His perfections, His power, wisdom, justice, grace, mercy, truth, love. In His providence and care over you, to believe in such a way as that we shall revere, obey, and love God. To believe in Jesus—"Ye believe in God, believe also in Me"—that I am what the prophets said I should be, the true Messiah. Believe in the fulness of My love, the sufficiency of My atoning work, My ability and willingness to pardon and cleanse, and in the absolute and unchanging truthfulness of all My words. Believe in the Holy Ghost; in His convincing, converting, renewing, sustaining, and sanctifying energy. Believe in the duties pertaining to personal life and godliness as I have revealed them. 2. I have met with not a few young folks who have been sadly perplexed with the question as to what they shall be. One has solved it by saying, "I shall be a great merchant; my ships shall sail on many seas, and my servants and warehouses shall be exceedingly numerous." Another has said, "Science shall be my study."

A third has said, "I will be a physician, and I will try to relieve the poor of their maladies." To all such the Heavenly Counsellor comes, and He does not say to such, "How mistaken you all are, you must all change your decisions." Oh no, but He counsels the farmer as he sows to sow goodness, that when the reaping time comes he may reap the same. To the philosopher He counsels the study of the wisdom which is from on high, and which is full of good works; and to the merchant He says, "Let goodness be the article in which you shall always trade; let it store your warehouses, fill the holds of your ships, and govern all your transactions." To all the Heavenly Counsellor says, "Be good; have a good heart, a good conscience, a good intention, a good life." 3. This Heavenly Counsellor tells us also what we are to do. Activity, under His advice, is always to characterise us. The Lord Jesus knows as no one else the great evils of idleness, and how such evils must afflict and torment all who are slothful; and so against this sin He plainly counsels us. In the cultivation of inward holiness and in the development of righteous principles, in the hope of winning souls for heaven and God, work. II. CHRIST'S COUNSELS ARE ALL AND ALWAYS GOLDEN, so that not any mixture can be detected; they have all passed through, and been stamped in, the minting house of heaven. But how shall we know that these counsels are all golden? 1. In the first place, because of their genuineness. It matters not the test through which we put them, or the analysis they are subjected to; not all the testing in the world can either detect the least impurity or make them more genuine than they are. Who, I should like to know, seeks the good of every man, woman, boy, and girl, as Jesus does? And whose counsel when adopted has resulted in such untold good to millions of our fellow creatures as His? Yes, look at it how, when, and where you may, ring it as you please, weigh it, measure it, or bring any other test you please to bear upon the counsel offered by Jesus, and its genuineness will be made the more evident. 2. Because of the value of His counsels. All genuine things are not so valuable as gold; a violet is a genuine violet, but we don't part with gold for violets. The paper on which I am writing is genuine paper, but it is not of the value of gold. The counsel Jesus gives is not only as valuable, but more so than gold. Do you ask what the advice Jesus gives will procure? It will procure for us the favour of God, the approval of angels, and the esteem of all good men. It will procure for us peace within and purity without, enable us to live soberly, righteously, and godly here, and then to sit down in the kingdom of God above and to go no more out. 3. Like gold, they must be searched for. The name of the mine is "the Bible," the implements with which we are to work are prayer, patience, and faith. By knee work and ceaseless industry they will be amply recompensed. 4. Because, like gold, they are to be used. Some people who keep a shop hang up His counsels in their parlours and drawing-rooms; it would be better if they would use them in their business. Some look at them when they put on their Sunday clothes, and then say adieu to them when Sabbath attire is laid away. Better if they would walk and move and live in the same all the week through. Then, like gold, if we use Christ's counsels aright, they will increase more and more. III. NO ONE IS ENTITLED TO EXPECT THIS GOLDEN COUNSEL FOR NOTHING. Men do not part with gold on such terms, nor does Jesus part with His counsels thus, and so He says, "I counsel thee to buy." 1. We are to obtain this counsel in the first place by giving up all our sins. What an exchange! It is dross of the worst for gold of the very best kind. If a man were to come and offer gold and crowns, titles and lands, for old rags and bones, I feel sure there would not be many left in all the houses put together; and yet, whilst Jesus offers the gold of heaven if we will only forsake our evil ways and come to Him, how few are really eager to make the exchange. 2. Then in a sense we purchase the gold of heaven by using aright the quantity already given. It is by use the two talents become five, and the five talents ten. If we walk in the light already given, however faint and feeble it may be, it will conduct us to greater clearness and to more perfect vision. (*J. Goodacre.*) *Christ's counsel to a lukewarm Church*.—He does not willingly threaten, and He never scolds; but He rather speaks to men's hearts, and their reason, and comes to them as a friend, than addresses Himself to their fears. 1. Now, I observe that the first need of the lukewarm Church is to OPEN ITS EYES TO SEE FACTS. Observe that the text falls into two distinct parts, and that the counsel to buy does not extend—though it is ordinarily read as if it did—to the last item in our Lord's advice. These Laodiceans are bid to "buy of" Him "gold" and "raiment," but they are bid to use the "eyesalve" that they "may see." No doubt, whatever is meant by

that "eyesalve" comes from Him, as does everything else. But my point is that these people are supposed already to possess it, and that they are bid to employ it. No doubt the exhortation, "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see," may be so extended as to refer to the general condition of spiritual blindness which attaches to humanity, apart from the illuminating and sight-giving work of Jesus Christ. That true Light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world, has a three-fold office as the result of all the parts of which there comes to our darkened eyes the vision of the things that are. He reveals the objects to see; He gives the light by which we see them; and He gives us eyes to see with. "Behold Me as I am, and the things that I reveal to you as they are; and then you will see yourselves as you are." So, then, there comes out of this exhortation this thought, that a symptom constantly accompanying the lukewarm condition is absolute unconsciousness of it. In all regions the worse a man is the less he knows it. It is the good people that know themselves to be bad; the bad ones, when they think about themselves, conceit themselves to be good. The higher a man climbs in any science, or in the practice of any virtue, the more clearly he sees the unscaled peaks above him. The frost-bitten limb is quite comfortable. Another thought suggested by this part of the counsel is that the blind man must himself rub in the eyesalve. Nobody else can do it for him. True! It comes like every other good thing, from the Christ in the heavens; and, as I have already said, if we will attach specific meanings to every part of a metaphor, that "eyesalve" may be the influence of the Divine Spirit who convicts men of sin. But whatever it is you have to apply it to your own eyes. Our forefathers made too much of self-examination as a Christian duty, and pursued it often for mistaken purposes. But this generation makes far too *light* of it. Apply the eyesalve; it will be keen, it will bite; welcome the smart, and be sure that anything is good for you which takes away the veil that self-complacency casts over your true condition, and lets the light of God into the cellars and dark places of your souls. II. The second need of the lukewarm Church IS THE TRUE WEALTH WHICH CHRIST GIVES. "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire." Now, there may be many different ways of putting the thought that is conveyed here, but I think the deepest truth of human nature is that the only wealth for a man is the possession of God. That wealth alone makes us paupers truly rich. For there is nothing else that satisfies a man's craving, and supplies a man's needs. That wealth has immunity from all accidents. No possession is truly mine of which any outward contingency or circumstance can deprive me. But this wealth, the wealth of a heart enriched with the possession of God, whom it knows, loves, trusts, and obeys, this wealth is incorporated with a man's very being, and enters into the substance of his nature; and so nothing can deprive him of it. The only possession which we can take with us when our nerveless hands drop all other good, and our hearts are untwined from all other loves, is this durable riches. III. The third need of a lukewarm Church IS THE RAIMENT—THAT CHRIST GIVES. The wealth which He bids us buy of Him belongs mostly to our inward life; the raiment which He proffers us to wear, as is natural to the figure, applies mainly to our outward lives, and signifies the dress of our spirits as these are presented to the world. I need not remind you of how frequently this metaphor is employed throughout the Scripture. There is nothing in the world vainer than effort after righteousness which is not based on faith. "Buy of Me raiment," and then, listen to the voice which says, "Put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man of God created in righteousness and holiness of truth." IV. Lastly, ALL SUPPLY OF THESE NEEDS IS TO BE BOUGHT. "Buy of Me." There is nothing in that counsel contradictory to the great truth, that "the gift of God is eternal life." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **Gold tried in the fire.**—*Tried gold* :—I. A PRECIOUS COMMODITY. 1. Gold represents the blessed Saviour, for He is the most excellent of beings. 2. Gold represents the gospel, for it is the most excellent of systems. 3. Gold represents the Christian graces, for they are the most permanent of treasures. Faith, hope, and love have a power to bless beyond this world's wealth. II. THIS PRECIOUS COMMODITY TRIED. Even philosophy itself has confessed that the gold of the gospel alone will sustain in the final conflict. III. THIS TRIED AND PRECIOUS COMMODITY IS OFFERED FOR ACCEPTANCE. It is strange but true that men reject salvation because it is freely offered. Pride resents the humbling conditions. Self-will tramples beneath its feet offered mercy. IV. THE GLORIOUS CONSEQUENCE OF ACCEPTING. Soul riches are the true abiding wealth. (*W. Burrows, B.A.*) *Aggravated poverty of soul* :—If a man's gold prove counterfeit, his jewels painted glass, his silver lead or dross, he will not only be found poor

when he comes to be tried, and want the benefit of riches, but will also have a fearful aggravation of his poverty, by his disappointment and surprisal. If a man's faith, which should be more precious than gold, be found rotten and corrupt, if his light be darkness; how vile is that faith, how great is that darkness! (*J. Owen, D.D.*)

Vers. 19-22. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.—*Divine chastisement* :—

I. IN REFERENCE TO THE SINNER, WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF DIVINE CHASTISEMENT? The merciful design is the conviction and conversion of the sinner, his restoration to the image of God. And what are the means employed by the Holy Spirit for this end? Sickness, poverty, bereavements, the ministry of the Word, the faithful admonition of a loving friend, or even a tract offered by the wayside. II. IN REGARD TO THE LORD'S OWN PEOPLE, WHAT IS HIS DESIGN IN AFFLICTING THEM? 1. To prevent sin in them. He sees the beginning of mischief in the heart, and He nips the sin in the bud. 2. To wean them from this present world. 3. To lead them nearer to Himself. III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE SAVIOUR TOWARDS SINNERS. (*H. E. Windle, M.A.*) *Christ disclosing His love* :—The Lord next declares His love to Laodicea. It has really been love all through; but now He speaks the word out—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." What He has already said, severe and even terrible, has been said in love; and indeed love is the root of His whole dealing with them, love that would get quit of their sin. Now this is a thing that helps to cure lukewarmness. Love is the key that opens the barred door of the sinful heart. And the Saviour discloses His love to the Laodiceans that He may thereby touch them, melt them, restore them. I think there is a lesson here that we need to learn. We come into the presence of Laodicean lukewarmness. We are grieved by it. We are angered even more than we are grieved. We are tempted to denounce it. Ah, but here is a nobler way—to be ourselves loving! Out of Christ's love there spring "rebuke" and "chastening." Rebuke is not mere fault-finding, or "coming down upon" a man, or "giving it hot"; that is easy enough; commonly it is the outcome of the wrath of man, which worketh not the righteousness of God; and not seldom it is directed against those who do not deserve it. One of the sad things among us, indeed, is this cruel misdirection of censure. To rebuke means to bring sin home convincingly to the judgment and the conscience. To rebuke is a very different thing from fault-finding, and as high above it as heaven is above the earth. Nothing but love can do it—high-purposed, firm, holy love. It means the setting of sin so clearly and fully and convincingly before the mind and conscience, that you carry the person with you, and he is convinced. That is what love tries, and what only love can accomplish. And that is what Christ is doing with the Laodiceans now. He is setting the truth of their condition before their consciences, in holiest and tenderest mercy, that shrinks not from giving pain in order that it may heal. But this were not enough, unless something is done to help the sinner out of his evil estate. For the Lord to have reproved or convinced the Laodiceans would not have been enough. Without "conviction" there is and can be no "conversion"; but He could not have stopped short with it, any more than the physician may stop short with telling us our disease. Therefore He adds "chastening" to rebuke. We must dismiss the idea of punishment. That does not lie in the word. Punishment is the deed of a judge; chastening is the work of a father. We must start from the realised fact of our sonship in the Divine family. The word "chastening" brings into view, under the new covenant, the whole process of earthly training for heavenly issues, which God in His wisdom ordains and conducts, and of which suffering forms so large an element. And this is the issue to which the rebuke and chastening of love should lead: "Be zealous, and repent." Let the zeal show itself in this line. It is a man taking God's side against his own sin, and looking to God to deliver him from it. It results, not from the will of the flesh or the will of man, but from God's work in the conscience. It has its birth in a true apprehension by faith of the mercy of God in Christ. (*J. Culross, D.D.*) *God afflicts for our good; and what that good is* :—I. GOD'S RULE. 1. That God chastises His children out of love, and for their good. (1) Afflictions to them whom God loves are medicinal, and thereby they recover their health by repentance from some spiritual disease. (2) Afflictions are preservatives to keep them whom God loveth from sin (2 Cor. xii. 7). (3) Afflictions make the fruitless bring forth fruit, beget many virtues, and make God's graces in us to bloom and bring forth works pleasing unto our Heavenly Father. (4) Afflictions draw men nearer unto God. The main use of all is for comfort in all our sufferings and crosses whensoever God sends them: for

they are signs of our sonship and tokens of His love. 2. That if God spares not those whom He loveth, much less shall His enemies escape punishment. 3. That God rebukes before He chastens. (1) If this then be God's manner of dealing, it should behove us not lightly to pass by His warnings. (2) If God so powerfully warns His creature before He strikes him, how dare we strike our brother before we warn him? II. OUR DUTY. We must be zealous, and repent. 1. Concerning zeal. (1) Zeal is the intention and vehemency of all our affections in matters of God and His service. It hath its name of *Zēw*, which is, to burn and boil as water over the fire, and thence may be styled the fervency of our affections. Such a one was Apollos (Acts xviii. 25); and such St. Paul exhorts the Romans to be (Rom. xii. 11). For as burning is the excess or highest pitch of heat, so is zeal of our affections. But as in our bodies we find aguish burnings as well as the healthful vigour of natural heat; and as Nadab and Abihu offered fire unto God, but not the right and holy fire (Lev. x. 1), so are there some counterfeits of zeal, as it were false fires, abominable unto God and odious unto men. The kinds, then, of false zeal may be reduced unto three heads. (a) Hypocritical zeal, which wants sincerity. (b) Blind zeal, which wants knowledge. (c) Turbulent zeal, which wants love and moderation. Thus I have briefly described these false fires, that by the law of contraries we may know who is the true zealot. (2) But why should this zeal be so needful? Let us therefore now see the reasons. (a) First, therefore, I will seek no farther than my text, where the want of zeal is reckoned for a sin, a sin to be repented of, "Be zealous, and repent": is not that needful, without which all our works are sinful? (b) It is the ground rule of the whole law of God, and of all the precepts concerning His worship, that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. What else is this but to love Him zealously, to worship Him with the highest pitch of our affections? For He is the sovereign and chiefest good; what love then can suit to Him but the very top and sovereignty of love? (c) Zeal is that which carries our devotions up to heaven. As wings to a fowl, wheels to a chariot, sails to a ship; so is zeal to the soul of man. Without zeal our devotions can no more ascend than vapours from a still without fire put under it. 2. Repentance is the changing of our course from the old way of sin unto the new way of righteousness: or more briefly, a changing of the course of sin for the course of righteousness. It is called also conversion, turning and returning unto God. I will describe it briefly in five degrees, which are as five steps in a ladder, by which we ascend up to heaven. (1) The first step is the sight of sin and the punishment due unto it. For how can the soul be possessed with fear and sorrow, except the understanding do first apprehend the danger?—for that which the eye sees not, the heart rues not. The serious penitent must be like the wary factor, he must retire himself, look into his books, and turn over the leaves of his life; he must consider the expense of his time, the employment of his talent, the debt of his sin, and the strictness of his account. (2) And so he shall ascend unto the next step, which is sorrow for sin. For he that seriously considers how he hath grieved the Spirit of God and endangered his own soul by his sins, cannot but have his spirit grieved with remorse. (3) The third step up this ladder is the loathing of sin. A surfeit of meats, how dainty and delicate soever, will afterwards make them loathsome. (4) The fourth step is the leaving off sin. To what purpose doth the physician evacuate ill humours, if the patient still distempers himself with ill diet? What shall it avail a man to endure the lancing, searching, and tending of a wound, if he stay not for the cure? (5) The fifth and last step is the cleaving unto God with full purpose of heart to walk before Him in newness of life. All the former degrees of repentance were for the putting off of the old man; this is for the putting on of the new. III. THE CONNECTION AND DEPENDENCE of these latter words ("Be zealous therefore, and repent") upon the former ("As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.") Many things might be here observed, but I will name but one, which is this, that repentance is the means to avoid and prevent God's judgments. For (as Tertullian observes) He that hath decreed to publish by justice, hath promised to grant pardon by repentance. And so Jer. xviii. 7. (*J. Mede, B.D.*) *The love and the discipline*:—How soon a Church goes down! How quickly its love and holiness and zeal fade away! One generation often sees its rise, decline, and fall. The soul withers; the eye that looked upward now looks downward; and the once "religious man," who "did run well," takes the downward path into lukewarmness or death. Yet Jesus leaves him not. I. THE LOVE. The "I" here is emphatic, and by its prominence Christ presents Himself specially as the lover,

the rebuker, the chastener. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His ways. He loves where others would hate. He shows His love by chastening where others would show theirs by indulging. II. THE DISCIPLINE OF LOVE. Mark the way in which this love deals with Laodicea. It deals in tenderness, and yet in solemn severity. Instead of letting Laodicea escape, it takes hold of her, as a wise father of his disobedient child, and makes her sensible how much it hates the sin.

1. He reproves by word and deed.
2. What the chastening was we know not: it would be something specially suited to the self-sufficiency and worldliness of the Laodiceans. Perhaps they were stripped of their riches; perhaps visited by sickness and death; laid desolate by grievous sorrow; some long-continued trial, stroke upon stroke, crushing and emptying them. Whatever it may cost, they must be made to feel the evil of their ways.

III. THE EXHORTATION OF LOVE. Be zealous, therefore, and repent. The word "zealous" contrasts with lukewarmness, and implies true warmth and fervour. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) **Be zealous.**—*Religious zeal*:—It is evident that the zeal which is here recommended has religion for its object. Now there are some who are mightily afraid of zeal as connected with religion. A zealous friend—a zealous teacher—a zealous patriot—are characters referred to with expressions of applause. But the moment that zeal mingles with religion, then there is distrust and disapproval. It is curious to observe how differently zeal in matters of religion is spoken of by these persons, and by the Word of God. Christ is here introduced as rebuking the Church of Laodicea for the want of it, and as commanding them to get that want supplied. But His will, as thus expressed, is not arbitrary. It is founded in the nature and reason of the case. Why, let me ask you, are you zealous for anything whatever? Is it not because that thing, in your opinion, is important to be attained, and because the attainment of it requires energy and effort? Now, can you explain how it is that the same mode of judging and acting should not be adopted in religion? In the first place, is religion destitute of importance, or is it less important than anything else which attracts your notice and interests your attention? Then, in the second place, do you consider religion to be of such easy acquirement that a man may be invested with all its character, and animated by all its spirit, and come to the enjoyment of all its blessings, though he gives himself no great concern about it, and treats it with coldness and indifference? And then, in the third place, if for the reasons now stated, we ought to be zealous in acquiring for ourselves an interest in the grace and blessings of the gospel, the same reasons should constrain us to be zealous also in communicating these to our fellow-men throughout the world. Religion is as important to them as it is to us. Moreover, if you are actuated by zeal in other cases, and feel it to be at once becoming and necessary, we may well require you to vindicate, if you can, a want of zeal or a condemnation of it, in that vocation wherewith you are called as the disciples of Christ. If it be right to cherish and display zeal in the study of literature and philosophy, in promoting the prosperity of your country, in advancing the welfare of your friends, upon what principle can it be wrong to cherish and display zeal in procuring for religion that ascendancy which it is entitled to hold over the minds and destinies of those for whose everlasting happiness it is intended? If religion be, as it is described in the Bible, and as you yourselves profess to regard it, then not only ought you to be zealous for it, but your zeal for it cannot be too great. Now what is the degree of importance that belongs to religion? Why, it is infinitely important. What! can you be too zealous in seeking after deliverance from "the worm that never dies, and from the fire that shall not be quenched"? Can you be too zealous in aspiring to that "inheritance which is incorruptible, and that crown of glory which fadeth not away"? Can you be too zealous in the pursuit of what was purchased at such a costly price as the blood of the incarnate Son of God? (*A. Thompson, D.D.*) *A coal from the altar*:—The true zealot, whose fervency is in the spirit, not in show; in substance, not in circumstance; for God, not himself; guided by the Word, not with humours; tempered with charity, not with bitterness: such a man's praise is of God though not of men; such a man's worth cannot be set forth with the tongues of men and of angels.

1. It is good to be zealous in good things, and is it not best in the best? Or is there any better than God, or the kingdom of heaven? Is mean and mediocrity in all excellent arts excluded, and only to be admitted in religion?
2. Consider and reason thus with thyself, canst thou brook a sluggard in thy work, if thou be of any spirit thyself? Do men choose the forwarddest deer in the herd, the liveliest colt in the drove? and is the backwardest man fittest for God? Is not all His delight in the quickest and cheerfulest givers and servitors?
3. This zeal is

so gracious a favourite with God, that it graces with Him all the rest of His graces. Prayer, if it be frequent, prevaileth much; the zealous witnesses had power to shut and open heaven (chap. xii.). 4. Zeal is the richest evidence of faith, and the clearest demonstration of the Spirit. Yea, but by what means shall a Christian attain this fire, and maintain it when he hath gotten it? Say not in thine heart, What Prometheus shall ascend into heaven and fetch it thence? Thou mayest fetch it thence by thine own prayer. Sermons are bellows ordained for this purpose. But here methinks I hear the lukewarm worldling of our times fume and chafe, and ask what needs all this ado for zeal, as if all God's people were not zealous enough. Such as think they are, or can be zealous enough, need no other conviction to be poor, blind, naked, wretched, and pitiful Laodiceans. Fire is ever climbing and aspiring higher; zeal is ever aiming at that which is before; carried toward perfection; thinking meanly of that which is past, and already attained. What would you have us to do? We profess, keep our church, hear sermons, as Christians ought to do. Affectionate friendship and service is not only for public show upon festival days, but for domestical, ordinary, and private use; to such holiday and church retainers, God may well say, Let us have some of this zeal at home and apart. (*A. Wood.*)

Religious zeal:—I. OUR ZEAL FOR RELIGION SHOULD BE REAL AND CONSCIENTIOUS. There is a zeal of sympathy, which is awakened and kept alive by the zeal of others with whom we happen to come in contact. Be "renewed in the spirit of your minds," that religion may appear to you in all its genuine excellence, and that it may hold that place in your regard to which it is justly entitled. Meditate seriously on the interest which you personally have in all that it requires you to believe, and in all that it commands you to do. Think of its necessity to the redemption and well-being of every one of the human race. II. OUR ZEAL FOR RELIGION MUST BE INTELLIGENT, OR ACCOMPANIED WITH KNOWLEDGE. III. THERE MUST BE PRUDENCE IN THE EXERCISE AND MANIFESTATION OF OUR RELIGIOUS ZEAL. Prudence does not damp nor discourage our zeal. It only prevents us from giving those expressions to it which, on the one hand, would be attended with no benefit, and, on the other, might involve us in difficulties and embarrassments. IV. OUR ZEAL FOR RELIGION MUST ALWAYS CONSIST WITH MORAL INTEGRITY. It never can be allowable for us to do what is morally wrong, whatever be the advantageous consequences that are to follow it. And least of all, one should suppose, can such a proceeding be allowable, when we are striving to advance the interests of religion. V. OUR RELIGIOUS ZEAL MUST BE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF CHARITY. Our zeal being awakened to care for men, charity comes in to soften that aspect of sternness and severity, which it might otherwise assume, and to mould it into a form more consonant to the nature and circumstances of those for whom it is to labour, as well as to the spirit and precepts of that religion which it is desirous to propagate. VI. OUR ZEAL MUST BE IN PROPORTION TO THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE OBJECTS WHICH EXCITE IT, AND TO THE EXIGENCIES IN WHICH THESE MAY HAPPEN TO BE PLACED. Every system has certain leading principles and properties of which it cannot be divested, while there are other subordinate principles and properties, which appear, neither in themselves nor in their relations, to be necessary to its existence, and to its ultimate purpose. And so is it with Christianity. Being a plan of Divine contrivance, all that is to be found in it, must be considered as important and useful; but it is evident that there are some things more important and useful than others. And this being the case, it follows, of course, that whether we be cherishing Christianity in ourselves, or pressing it on the attention of others, our zeal must not operate with equal ardour upon every subject, but bear some sort of proportion to the real or the relative importance which they possess—the most important receiving its highest, and the less important its lower measure of warmth and energy (*A. Thomson, D.D.*)

The nature, importance, and right exercise of Christian zeal:—I. ITS NATURE. II. ITS IMPORTANCE. Zeal is an appropriate quality of the spiritual life—the genial heat of the new nature, immediately subservient to its continuance and support, and operating to maintain its powers in their proper capacity for action. In nature, heat is the most active of all the elements. It is the prime agent which the Author of nature employs for promoting the subsistence and well-being of the universe. Animal and vegetable life have an immediate dependence on it; nor could nature itself, according to its apparent constitution and laws, subsist without it. To the effects of heat in nature, those of zeal in religion are directly analagous. How incapable of exertion, how indisposed to motion, how listless and insensible are men found, when their spirits are benumbed with cold affection! But under the

influence of that kindly warmth which the Spirit of God imparts, how quickly do they revive, and become pliant and active! While zeal is thus necessary to the effectual performance of the Christian's work, it contributes also, as an effectual qualification, to render his service acceptable. III. RIGHTLY EXERCISED. 1. On right objects—objects which are intrinsically good, and which are of suitable importance. Should the furnace be heated seven times more than usual for no worthier purpose than the burning of a straw? 2. Zeal must also be exercised with a right mind. (1) Zeal must be exercised with knowledge. Perhaps there is nothing that is either more unseemly in itself or more mischievous in its consequences than zeal without knowledge. Such a zeal, considered in its exercise, may be compared to a ship, driving with full sail before the wind, without either compass or pilot—threatening the safety of everything that comes in her way, and in danger of driving at last upon some rock or shoal that shall cause her destruction. (2) Zeal must be exercised with sincerity. The concern which is expressed for religion must be real—the genuine result of principle and feeling—not affected, merely to cover sinister designs, to second views of worldly interest, to minister to secret pride—to the selfish vain-glorious desire of applause and estimation. (3) Genuine zeal must be exercised with impartiality—with an equal regard to the attainment of its object—whether it has respect to ourselves or to others. The zeal of too many is chiefly occupied abroad, in detecting and exposing the sins of others. (4) Zeal must be exercised with kind affection. (*T. Fleming, D.D.*) *Christian zeal*:—1. True Christian zeal includes knowledge. It is not a blind impulse of feeling, an ignorant and infuriated passion, but a holy intelligent principle. 2. True Christian zeal includes indignation. The simple effusions of the heart in the way of grief on account of sin do not come up to the idea of zeal. It is grief and indignation at sin roused to the very utmost. 3. True Christian zeal includes ardent desire. The immediate object of this zeal is the declarative glory of God. It is a holy indignation at sin, because this evil throws a dark shade over God's glory. It is an ardent and passionate concern that God may be glorified. 4. Christian fortitude and magnanimity are also branches of this temper. The person that is truly zealous is not easily intimidated. 5. True Christian zeal is an active and useful principle. It grasps with the greatest eagerness every means which may be subservient to the attainment of its object. (*R. Culbertson.*) *Christian zeal*:—I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL. II. THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL. Christian zeal is zeal for Christ; it has Him for its ultimate source, as well as its ultimate end. Christian "enthusiasm" is really "the state of inspiration by God." III. THE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL. True zeal is of course "zeal for God" and for good. IV. THE QUALITIES WHICH SHOULD CHARACTERISE CHRISTIAN ZEAL. 1. True Christian zeal is intelligent. There is light in it as well as heat. 2. It is prudent. Plans warily, and works calmly. 3. It is loving and sympathetic. 4. It is patient and persevering. Not a fitful impulse, but a steady flame. Based on principle, it is the habit of the Christian's life. V. THE MOTIVES WHICH SUSTAIN CHRISTIAN ZEAL. 1. Love to the Redeemer. 2. The salvation of the world. 3. The prosperity of our own souls. What a protection zeal is against the coldness of the world—what a defence against temptation—what a preservative against moral deterioration—what a suitable preparation for the holy activities of heaven! (*C. Jordan, M.A.*) *Zeal*:—When a man dies in England, his friends often say of him, in praise of his diligence, energy, and concentration: "Well, he lived simply to carry through that important line of railway"; or—"His only object was to extort from the Government a more scientific education for the people"; or—"He devoted himself to the cause of Free Trade"; or—"He was a martyr to his exertions in behalf of Protection." It was his one idea; it grew with his growth; he could think of nothing else; he spared neither time nor expense to advance ever so little his favourite cause, and the interest he had wedded; it was his monomania. He did his work in his day, and he did it well, because he was heart and soul in it; and the world is in debt to him for it. Now, why should it not be said of us: "Well, he is gone. He was a man of one idea: he cared for nothing but that God's kingdom should come, and His will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. He was eaten up with this; waking or sleeping it was always upon him; nothing daunted him; he spared neither time nor expense for his hobby, and when neither time nor money were at his disposal, he besieged heaven with prayers. He took no interest in anything else; it was meat and drink to him, and it quite mastered him; and now he is gone." Yes! he is gone; but whereas the other man left behind him his railway and his cheap bread, our friend has taken all his love and pains and prayers away with him to the

judgment-seat of Jesus; and what they have done for him there, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor man's heart conceived.

Ver. 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.—*The Guest of the heart*:—I. THE STRANGER-GUEST WANTING TO COME IN. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." 1. When a stranger comes to your door, it matters a good deal to your feeling as a host whether he be a mean man or a great one. An inhospitable act done to your Queen might never vex you at all if it was only done to an obscure wanderer. Who, then, is this? Is He mean? or is He great? He does not look very great in the starlight. But He is. At home He is worshipped, and wields all command; and beings before whom the mightiest of the earth are as infants, only venture to bow themselves at His feet when their faces are shielded from the lustre of His glory. 2. When a stranger comes to your door, it is a consideration for you whether he has come to a door only, or to your door; whether he has come to your door by chance, or to yourself on purpose. Has this Stranger, then, just happened upon this cottage-door as one that serves His turn as well as any other? or does He mean to seek this very home and this very board, if haply He may be welcomed as a friend? How deeply does He mean it, and how tenderly! 3. When a stranger comes to your door, it is of some moment to you whether he has come but a short distance to see you, or has come from far. This waiting Stranger—whence comes He? From another country? He has come from another world. Through peril, through tribulation, He has come hither. 4. When a stranger comes to your door, it is a thing of influence with you whether your visitor is in earnest to get in, or shows indifference, and soon gives up the endeavour. A caller who knocks and goes off again before you have had reasonable time to answer. 5. When a stranger comes to your door, it is of every consequence to you what may be the character of himself, and the complexion of his errand. Is he good, and likely come for good? or is he evil, and likely come for evil? What far-brought tidings, what peace, what hopes, what aids, what influence, he fetches with him! II. THE STRANGER-GUEST GETTING IN. "If any man hear My voice, and open the door." 1. The Stranger did not force an entrance. It is from the inside, after all, that a man's heart opens to his Saviour-King. 2. At the same time it is of the utmost importance to note, that the transaction, with this indispensable element of free choice in it, is the veriest simplicity. "If any man hear," "and open"—lo! it is accomplished, and the Son of God is within. Very natural it may be—after you have at last acknowledged the Voice by some beginnings of faith, and have arisen at its call—to bustle long about the apartment in a process of rearranging, cleansing, tidying, adorning. Not less natural it may be to sit down, after a desponding glance around you, and endeavour to devise some plan by which you may entertain the Guest more worthily. All the while, and all the same, your Guest is standing without. The one luckless fact is the tardiness of your hospitality. The honour is done Him by nothing but by letting Him in. And more: your heart-home will only be made fit for His presence by His presence. 3. But there may be some one who is saying with a certain sincerity, "I have tried to open my heart to Christ, and I could not—cannot!" It will baffle your own strength. But what of your Guest Himself, and that power of His—so freely available now? III. THE STRANGER-GUEST IN. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." It is a scene with much light in it, and an atmosphere of security and deep peace. (*J. A. Kerr Bain, M.A.*) *Christ's loving earnestness*:—I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST. It is free love. It is large love. It is love irrespective of goodness in us. II. THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST. He stands, and He has stood, as the words imply—not afar off, but nigh, at the door. He stands. It is the attitude of waiting, of perseverance in waiting. He does not come and go; He stands. He does not sit down, or occupy Himself with other concerns. He has one object in view. III. THE EARNESTNESS OF CHRIST. If the standing marks His patience, the knocking marks His earnestness—His unwearied earnestness. 1. How does He knock? 2. When does He knock? IV. THE APPEAL OF CHRIST TO THE LAODICEANS. "If any man will hear My voice, and open the door." It is—1. A loving appeal. 2. A personal appeal. 3. An honest appeal. 4. An earnest appeal. V. THE PROMISE OF CHRIST. 1. I will come in to Him. His standing on the outside is of no use to us. A mere outside Christ will profit us nothing. An outside cross will not pacify, nor heal, nor save. 2. I will sup with him. He comes in as a guest, to take a place at our poor table and to partake of our homely meal. 3. He shall sup with Me. Christ has a banquet in preparation. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The Christ at the door*:—These wonderful words need no heightening

of their impressiveness, and yet there are two considerations which add pathos and beauty to them. The one is that they are all but the last words which the seer in Patmos heard in his vision, from the lips of the exalted Christ. Parting words are ever impressive words; and this is the attitude in which Jesus desired to be thought of by all coming time. Another consideration intensifying the impressiveness of the utterance is that it is the speech of that Christ whose exalted glories are so marvellously portrayed in the first chapter of this book. The words are marvellous too, not only for that picture, but for the clear decisiveness with which they recognise the solemn power that men have of giving or refusing an entrance to Him; and still further, for the grandeur of their promises to the yielding heart which welcomes Him. I. THE EXALTED CHRIST ASKING TO BE LET IN TO A MAN'S heart. The latter words of the verse suggest the image of a banquet hall. The chamber to which Christ desires entrance is full of feasters. There is room for everybody else there but Him. Now the plain sad truth which that stands for about us, is this: That we are more willing to let anybody and anything come into our thoughts, and find lodgment in our affections, than we are to let Jesus Christ come in. The next thought here is of the reality of this knocking. Every conviction, every impression, every half inclination towards Him that has risen in your hearts, though you fought against it, has been His knocking there. And think of what a revelation of Him that is! We are mostly too proud to sue for love, especially if once the petition has been repulsed; but He asks to be let into your heart because His nature and His name is Love, and being such, He yearns to be loved by you, and He yearns to bless you. II. NOTICE THAT AWFUL POWER WHICH IS RECOGNISED HERE AS RESIDING IN US, to let Him in or to keep Him out. "If any man will open the door"—the door has no handle on the outside. It opens from within. Christ knocks: we open. What we call faith is the opening of the door. And is it not plain that that simple condition is a condition not imposed by any arbitrary action on His part, but a condition indispensable from the very nature of the case? III. THE ENTRANCE OF THE CHRIST, with His hands full of blessing. It is the central gift and promise of the gospel "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." He Himself is the greatest of His gifts. He never comes empty-handed, but when He enters in He endows the soul with untold riches. We have here also Christ's presence as a Guest. "I will come in and sup with Him." What great and wonderful things are contained in that assurance! Can we present anything to Him that He can partake of? Yes! We may give Him our service and He will take that; we may give Him our love and He will take that, and regard it as dainty and delightful food. We have here Christ's presence not only as a Guest, but also as Host—"I will sup with him and he with Me." As when some great prince offers to honour a poor subject with his presence, and let him provide some insignificant portion of the entertainment, whilst all the substantial and costly parts of it come in the retinue of the monarch, from the palace. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The heavenly Visitor*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED by the expression, "I stand at the door." 1. That Christ is outside man's heart. 2. That He is deliberately excluded. 3. That He is excluded in favour of other guests. 4. That notwithstanding He wishes to enter. 5. That He recognises our liberty to admit Him. II. BY WHAT MEANS HE MAKES HIS PRESENCE KNOWN. III. THE BLESSINGS TO BE ENJOYED BY THOSE WHO ADMIT HIM. 1. Reconciliation. 2. Communion. 3. Refreshment. (Thos. Heath.) *Christ at the door*:—I. THE PERSON. The Greatest at the door of the meanest. II. THE ATTITUDE. 1. Service. 2. Waiting expectation. 3. Supplication. III. THE ACTION. IV. THE OBJECT. (Homilist.) *The pleading Saviour*:—I. THE SAVIOUR'S HUMILITY AND CONDESCENSION. 1. Patience. Repeated application where rudely repulsed. 2. Desire to enter. Not for His own good or gratification, but for our salvation, because He delights in mercy. II. THE SAVIOUR'S PERSISTENT EFFORTS. III. THE SAVIOUR'S PROFFERED REWARD. The presence of Christ is the highest privilege man can desire. It involves—1. Familiarity. 2. Reciprocity. 3. Unity. 4. Enjoyment. (Ibid.) *Christ at the door*:—I. THE SUPPLIANT FOR ADMISSION. A strange reversal of the attitudes of the great and of the lowly, of the giver and of the receiver, of the Divine and of the human! Christ once said, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." But He has taken the suppliant's place. So, then, there is here a revelation, not only of a universal truth, but a most tender and pathetic disclosure of Christ's yearning love to each of us. What do you call that emotion which more than anything else desires that a heart should open and let it enter? We call it love when we find it in one another. Surely it bears the same

name when it is sublimed into all but infinitude, and yet is as individualising and specific as it is great and universal, as it is found in Jesus Christ. And then, still further, in that thought of the suppliant waiting for admission there is the explanation for us all of a great many misunderstood facts in our experience. That sorrow that darkened your days and made your heart bleed, what was it but Christ's hand on the door? Those blessings which pour into your life day by day "beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye yield yourselves living sacrifices." That unrest which dogs the steps of every man who has not found rest in Christ, what is it but the application of His hand to the obstinately-closed door? The stings of conscience, the movements of the Spirit, the definite proclamation of His Word, even by such lips as mine, what are they all except His appeals to us? And this is the deepest meaning of joys and sorrows, of gifts and losses, of fulfilled and disappointed hopes. If we understood better that all life was guided by Christ and that Christ's guidance of life was guided by His desire that He should find a place in our hearts, we should less frequently wonder at sorrows, and should better understand our blessings.

II. THE DOOR OPENED. Jesus Christ knocks, but Jesus Christ cannot break the door open. The door is closed, and unless there be a definite act on your part it will not be opened, and He will not enter. So we come to this, that to do nothing is to keep your Saviour outside; and that is the way in which most men that miss Him do miss Him. The condition of His entrance is simple trust in Him, as the Saviour of my soul. That is opening the door, and if you will do that, then, just as when you open the shutters, in comes the sunshine; just as when you lift the sluice in flows the crystal stream into the slimy, empty lock; so He will enter in, wherever He is not shut out by unbelief and aversion of will.

III. THE ENTRANCE AND THE FEAST. "I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me." Well, that speaks to us in lovely, sympathetic language, of a close, familiar, happy communication between Christ and my poor self which shall make all life as a feast in company with Him. John, as he wrote down the words "I will sup with him, and he with Me," perhaps remembered that upper room where, amidst all the bitter herbs, there was such strange joy and tranquility. But whether he did or no, may we not take the picture as suggesting to us the possibilities of loving fellowship, of quiet repose, of absolute satisfaction of all desires and needs, which will be ours if we open the door of our hearts by faith, and let Jesus Christ come in? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*Relation to Christ of the human soul:—***I. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SOUL.** He is constantly in contact with the soul. He does not come occasionally and then depart; He stands.

1. His deep concern. In the eye of Christ the soul is no trifling object: He knows its capabilities, relations, power, influence, interminable history.
2. His infinite condescension.
3. His wonderful patience.

II. HIS ACTION UPON THE SOUL. He does not stand there as a statue doing nothing. He knocks: He knocks at the door of intellect with His philosophic truths; at the door of conscience, with His ethical principles; at the door of love, with His transcendent charms; at the door of hope, with His heavenly glories; at the door of fear, with the terrors of His law.

1. The moral power of the sinner. The soul has the power to shut out Christ. It can bolt itself against its Creator. This it does by directing its thoughts to other subjects, by deadening its convictions, by procrastinations.
2. The consummate folly of the sinner. Who is shut out? Not a foe or thief; but a friend, a physician, a deliverer.
3. The awful guiltiness of the sinner. It shuts out its proprietor, its rightful Lord.

III. HIS AIM IN REFERENCE TO THE SOUL. It is not to destroy it; but to come into it and identify Himself with all its feelings, aspirations, and interests.

1. Inhabitation. "I will come unto him." We are perpetually letting people into our hearts. How pleased we are if some illustrious personage will enter our humble homes and sit down with us, &c.
2. Identification. "Sup with him and he with Me." I will be at home with him, be one with him. A conventionally great man deems it a condescension to enter the house of an inferior—he never thinks of identifying himself with the humble inmate. Christ does this with the soul that lets Him in. He makes its cares His own. (*Homilist.*)

*The illustrious Visitor:—***I. THE GREAT KINDNESS OF THE REDEEMER TO MAN.**

1. Compassion for man.
2. Condescension to man.
3. Communion with man. The Saviour does not come as a stranger, He comes as a friend and a guest.
4. The consummation of man. He takes possession of our spirits to make them perfect and glorious. This will be the perfecting of our humanity, the consummation of all our best and brightest hopes and capacities.

II. THE GREAT UNKINDNESS OF MAN TO THE REDEEMER.

1. Ignorance is the cause in some cases why the visit of the Saviour is not welcomed. If the ignorance be

involuntary and unavoidable, then it is not culpable; but if it be the result of a voluntary refusal to know who the Saviour is, and what His knocking means, then it shows great unkindness to the Redeemer, and is regarded by Him as a great sin. 2. Another cause is indifference. Some know that it is the Saviour standing at the door of their hearts; but they are so absorbed with other engagements, they are so careless about the unseen and eternal, that they let Him stand outside, and make no effort to let Him in. 3. Another cause is unbelief. 4. Prejudice is another cause of the unkindness of man to the Redeemer. The Cross is an offence to many. Prejudice blinds the eyes and hardens the heart and prevents man seeing Jesus as He really is—"the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." 5. The last cause of unkindness we will mention is ingratitude. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Christ at the door* :—I. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IS PROPOSED AS THE GRAND PRIVILEGE OF THE RACE. 1. The friendship which God offers is on entirely a human plane. Christian life is only a transfiguration of every-day life. 2. The friendship which God proposes is permanent in its continuance. II. AN UNDOUBTED PROOF OF THE DIVINE SINCERITY. 1. You see this in the fact that the entire proposal comes from Him. The grace of this transaction is absolutely marvellous. 2. You see this in the successive and persistent endeavours to bring this friendship within reach of the soul. III. THE ASSURANCE OF THE ENTIRE FULLNESS OF THE ATONEMENT. There is no restriction in the offers of Divine grace. 1. There is no limit on the human side. If any man will open his heart, the Saviour will come in. 2. There is positively no limit on the Divine side either. The offer is made in terms utterly without restriction. IV. AN EXPLICIT RECOGNITION OF HUMAN FREE AGENCY UNDER THE PLAN OF SALVATION BY GRACE. It is well to inquire why it is He thus pauses on the threshold. 1. It is not because He is unable to force His way in. There is no opposition so violent that He could not crush it beneath His Omnipotent might. 2. The reason for the Divine forbearance is found in the inscrutable counsels of the Divine wisdom. In the beginning, He drew one line around His own action. He determined to create a class of beings who should have minds and hearts of their own. A free chance to choose between serving Him and resisting Him He now gives to every one of us. And when He had thus established men in being, He sovereignly decided never to interfere with the free-will He had bestowed. V. IF ANY MAN IS FINALLY LOST, THE RESPONSIBILITY RESTS UPON HIS OWN SOUL. The Saviour has come so far, but it is perfectly clear He is coming no further. 1. Observe how unobscured is the final issue. There can be no mystery, there is no mistake about it. The Providence of God always clears the way up to the crisis, removing every side-consideration which can possibly confuse it. Education that fits for usefulness is a demand for usefulness; the love of our children is a hint for us to love God as children; social position, wealth, official station, accomplishments, popular favour; whoever has any of these ought to hear in them the accents of that quiet voice speaking to his heart: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." 2. Observe the ease of the condition required of us. It is only to open the door. Great things under the gospel are always simple. 3. Observe then, finally, what it is that keeps the Saviour out. Nothing but will. This is the inspired declaration: "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." That is, you set a definite purpose against the purpose of grace. Christ came and you resisted Him. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Christ knocking at the door of the soul :—I. THAT THERE IS IN THE HUMAN SOUL A DOOR FOR THE ENTRANCE OF THE TRUTH. 1. The intellect. Is not the theology of the Bible in its broad outlines reasonable? Christ, in the evidence, enlightenment, and conviction of the truth, stands knocking at the mind of man, and the greater the knowledge of the truth, the louder is the appeal for entrance. 2. The heart. Man is endowed with the capability of love and sympathy. He has warm affections. He is so constituted as to be attracted by the pathetic and the beautiful. Hence, he looks out upon nature with admiring eye. And it is to this capability in man that the truth appeals. It presents to him an ideal beauty in the life of Christ, as recorded by the gospel narrative, which ought to win his spirit into an imitation of the same. 3. The conscience. Man has the ability to turn his natural judgment to moral and spiritual questions, and this is what we mean by conscience. To this faculty the truth presents its requirements; convinces of failure in the devotion of the inner life to Christ; and spreads out before it the threat of avenging justice. 4. But, strange to say, the door of the soul is closed to the entrance of the truth. The door of the mind is closed by error, by ignorance, and by prejudice. The door of the heart is shut by pride, by unbelief, and by wilful sin. The door of the conscience is barred by a continued habit of evil. II. THAT AT

THE DOOR OF THE HUMAN SOUL THE TRUTH MAKES CONTINUED APPEALS FOR ENTRANCE. 1. This appeal of truth is authoritative. Truth comes to men with authority, even with the claim of a sinless life, and with the emphasis of a Divine voice. Its distinguished character should gain for it an immediate and hearty welcome into the soul, as a king should be welcomed into a cottage. But truth comes to men not only with the authority of character, but also with the authority of right. The faculties of the human mind were made to receive it. 2. The appeal of Truth is patient. Other guests have entered—wealth in splendid apparel, ambition with loud clamour, and pride with haughty mien—but Christ with gentle spirit has remained without. His patience has been co-extensive with our neglect of Him. It is Divine. 3. The appeal of truth is benevolent. The truth does not seek to enter the soul of man merely to spy out its moral defilement, to pass woful sentence on its evil-doings, but to cleanse it by the Holy Spirit, to save it by grace, to enlighten it by knowledge, and to cheer it by love. 4. The appeal of truth is heard. “And knock.” Knocks at the door are generally heard. And certainly this is the case in reference to the advent of Christ to the soul. It is impossible to live in this land of religious light and agency without being conscious of Divine knockings at the portal of the soul. III. THAT THE HUMAN SOUL HAS THE ABILITY OF CHOICE AS TO WHETHER IT WILL OPEN ITS DOOR FOR THE ENTRANCE OF THE TRUTH OR NOT. 1. The door of the soul will not be opened by any coercive methods. Does it not seem strange that Christ should have the key of the soul and yet stand without? This is only explained by the free agency of man. But though He enter not to dwell, the soul is visited by spiritual influences which are the universal heritage of man. 2. The door of the soul must be opened by moral methods. Calm reflection, earnest prayer, and a diligent study of the inspired Word, together with the gentle influences of the Divine Spirit, will open the soul to the entrance of Christ (Acts xvi. 14). IV. THAT IF THE HUMAN SOUL WILL OPEN ITS DOOR TO THE RECEPTION OF THE TRUTH, CHRIST WILL ENTER INTO CLOSE COMMUNION WITH IT. 1. Then Christ will inhabit the soul. “I will come in to him.” Thus, if Christ come into the soul He will dwell in its thoughts, in its affections, in its aspirations, in its aims, and in all its activities. He will elevate and consecrate them all. True religion just means this, Christ in the soul, and its language is (Gal. ii. 20). 2. Then Christ will be in sympathy with the soul. “And will sup with him.” It is impossible to have a feast in the soul unless Christ spreads the table; then the meal is festive. It removes sorrow; it inspires joy. While we are partaking of it we can relate to Christ all the perplexities of life. The good man carries a feast within him (John iv. 32). 3. Then Christ will strengthen the soul. He will strengthen the moral nature by the food He will give, by the counsel He will impart, and by the hope He will inspire. The feast, the supply of holy energy will be resident within. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The self-invited Guest*:—I. THAT, IN THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL, CHRIST IS THE UNINVITED GUEST, PLEADING FOR ADMISSION. Whatever acquaintance any of us may have with Jesus, the acquaintance began on His side: by Him are the first overtures invariably made. 1. The written gospel is a proof of it. 2. The Christian ministry is another proof. 3. The strivings of His Spirit are another instance of this. In the two former cases, His approach can more easily be avoided. II. THAT CONSENT ALONE IS REQUIRED, ON OUR PART, TO GIVE US A FULL PARTICIPATION IN HIS FRIENDSHIP. 1. The consent which is required. 2. The friendship which is offered. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Christ at the door of the heart*:—“Behold!” The sight is indeed a most astonishing one, which ought to fill our hearts with surprise and shame. God outside; He who ought to be recognised as Lord and Master of the human being, to whom we owe everything. I question whether there is any revelation made to us in the whole course of God’s Word that more strongly illustrates the persevering love of God. The love of God is not content with redeeming a guilty world, but He brings the redemption to the door of every human being. How, it is natural we should ask, is this extraordinary phenomenon to be explained? If we look at the context, we discover what the explanation is. “Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” Ah! it is in those words that the clue is found to the extraordinary spectacle. I cannot understand a man going on, year after year, realising his own inward want, and yet not accepting the supply which God has given. How is it that Satan prevents this? How is it that he brings us to the position which is indicated to us by this figure? By filling us with all sorts of things which are not God. What are they? Some make their religion a substitute for God. That is one of the very worst substitutes that we can

possibly fix upon. Again, how many persons there are who find an excellent substitute for Christ in morality. A man may have kept all the Ten Commandments, and yet, all the while, be shutting the door of his heart against Christ, and if a man does that, he keeps the letter of the Commandments, but not the spirit. Again, how many there are who take worldly pleasures as a substitute for God. Another thing set up in the place of God is the love of wealth. What is there that money cannot do? Another man puts learning in the place of God. What is there that intelligence cannot do? All these attempts to create substitutes, what are they? They are simply so many sins against your own soul. It would not have been at all a thing to be marvelled at, if we had read this passage thus: "The Lord once stood outside the door and knocked." Had the Lord Jesus Christ given us one offer of mercy, and given one loud, thundering "knock," and, being refused, left us to take the consequence, left us to our own miserable doom, you know we should have deserved it. Oh, deafen not your ears, men and women, against His call: do not be so blind to your own interest as to keep Him standing there: listen to what He says, "If any man hear My voice." Notice that. He does not say, "If any man makes himself moral; if any man will try and make himself better." That is not it, thank God! "If any man will shed oceans of tears." No, that is not it. "If any man has deep sorrow." No, that is not it. "If any man has powerful faith." No, that is not it. What is it He says? "If any man will hear My voice." As the preacher is speaking now, say, "God is speaking to my soul; He is speaking in all the infinity of His mercy: I cannot, I won't deafen my ear against Him." Well, as soon as the man hears the voice, he is on the highway to salvation. What more is wanted? Just one thing more. "If any man hear My voice, and will open unto Me." It does not sound very much, does it? "Ah, but," you say, "faith is so difficult. One man says, faith is this, and another says it is another thing." Do you think the Lord Jesus Christ will stand back if you say that? I tell you, you will find those bolts and bars will fly back the moment you tell Him you are willing. Now, what are you going to do? Nay, what will He do? He says, "If any man will open to Me, I will come in." Well, what will He do? Young man! you are thinking to yourself, "I should like to have Jesus as my Saviour, but if He comes to my heart He will bring a funeral procession with Him; my countenance will fall, my life will be overshadowed, my joy will be gone; my youthful pleasures will disappear, and I shall become mournful and morose." I tell you that is the devil's lie, not God's truth. Wherever Jesus is, He carries a feast along with Him, and so He says to-night, "If any man will open unto Me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) *Christ at the door of the heart:*—This door, at which the Saviour knocks, is the heart of man. In the gospel there is more than enough to give full exercise to the most powerful intellect: yet the final aim is at the heart. What the heart is, that the man is; he who wins the heart has the whole man. The door is the sinner's heart. That door is closed against Christ. He stands, and knocks. First, observe that it is the Lord who comes to us men, not we to Him. He not only comes to that door; He stands there waiting; nor doth He only stand and wait, but meekly standing thus and waiting, He knocks. So deeply does He long for entrance, that it is hard to make Him go. Canst thou not recall an hour, in which thy Saviour came to thee, and asked for entrance into thy thoughts and thy life? Many are called while yet children. The mind and heart of children are readier for the Lord than those of hardened men and women. Christ knocks at the hearts of children; if they do not open unto Him at that time, they may not do so until after many years; they may never do so, not even in the hour of death. "If any man hear My voice!" Can this be imagined, that any should not hear? or worse, that any would not hear? "The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation," saith the psalmist: "the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice." That voice may call; something within the heart may deaden the sound or shut it out. How dreadful is the state of such a soul! Marvel not, with this history before you, that the door is shut. The longer the heart is closed against its God, the harder to open it. The processes of nature have their due effect; the elements do their work in silence and surely; a work which every day makes more effectual. The bars, long stationary, rust in the staples; some time since, a child might have slipped them out and laid them aside; now, the strength of a man would essay the task in vain. The rains and snows of many a season have beaten into the lock and choked it up. In former days, a path led to this door; a path by which the good angels could reach it, and all honest Christian friends; a pathway,

pleasant to the eye, fresh with flowers, clean of rubbish, and easy to be found. Alas! how great the change! The pathway now is rough with stones, or seems to be, for so rankly is it overgrown with weeds, that its outline is all but lost. Breast-high on either hand are come up the briar and the thorn; the wall crumbles; it is grey with mould; an aspect of desolation weighs down the spirit as we gaze. Who would walk on yonder pathway? Who would try to approach that door? Yet there is One, who cometh up this way. He looks toward that closed and rusted door; He turns His holy feet to that forsaken path. His face is grave and sad, earnest, and full of love. He hath on Him the vesture of the High Priest who maketh intercession for sin. He is coming up the path. He has reached the gate. Behold, He standeth at the door. Without, around, all is silence. He knocks. Oh soul thus called by Jesus Christ, what answer wilt thou make? Perhaps there shall be no reply. The knock resounds within: the voice is heard outside; but within there is silence: neither knock nor voice can reach the ear of the spiritually dead. The door may shake in its rusty hinges; the bars may creak in the staples; but none comes to open. No wonder. There is nothing inside, save that worse than nothing, a dead soul; dead in sin, and buried in forgetfulness. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*)

*The Saviour knocking at the door:—*I. WHO KNOCKS? The Son of God, Immanuel, the Mediator betwixt God and man, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of glory, the Redeemer of the lost, Almighty to save, and all-sufficient to satisfy your souls. What hinders that you should not let Him in? II. DIFFERENT HEARTS ARE BOLTED WITH DIFFERENT BARS. Some are closed by carelessness, and some by ignorance, and some by indolence, and some by frivolity, and some by prejudice, and some by pride, and some by strong besetting sins. III. WERE YOU TO YIELD TO THE STRIVING SPIRIT—WERE YOU TO WITHDRAW THESE BOLTS, AND ADMIT INTO YOUR SOUL A MIGHTY AND MERCIFUL REDEEMER, WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCE? Pardon of sin would come. Peace of conscience would come. The smile of God would come into your soul. (*Jas. Hamilton, D.D.*)

*Christ standing at the door:—*I. WHO IS HE? 1. It is clear that He is some one of importance. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door; I who could never have been expected to stand there." He speaks, you observe, as though His coming to us would surprise us; just as we might suppose a monarch to speak at a beggar's door. And there is a reason for this. It is the glorious Redeemer who is here, the Monarch of earth and heaven. See then how this text sets forth at the very outset of it the Divine mercy. We think it a great thing that God should sit on a throne waiting for sinners to come to Him, but here He describes Himself as coming to sinners. II. WHAT IS THE LORD JESUS DOING AT OUR DOOR? 1. On our part, it implies this mournful fact, that our hearts are all naturally shut against Christ, yea, fastened, bolted, and barred, against Him. 2. On Christ's part, this expression implies a willingness to enter our hearts; and more than a willingness, an earnest desire to enter them. III. WHAT DOES THIS GRACIOUS STRANGER AT OUR DOOR WISH US TO DO? IV. WHAT WILL THIS EXALTED BEING AT OUR DOOR DO FOR US, IF WE LET HIM IN? 1. "I will come in to him." There His presence is promised, and with it the light and comfort and bliss and glory of it. 2. "I will sup with him, and he with Me." This implies a manifestation of Christ in the heart He dwells in, and intercourse and communion with it. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

*At the door:—*I. WHO STANDS? An ancient patriarch, by keeping open heart and open house for strangers, was privileged to entertain angels unawares. This day we may obtain a visit of the Lord of angels, if only we will let Him in. II. HOW NEAR HE COMES. "Behold, I stand at the door." We are not much moved by anything that is far distant. Whether the visitant be coming for judgment or mercy, we take the matter lightly, as long as he is far away. A distant enemy does not make us tremble—a distant friend fails to make us glad. When your protector is distant, you tremble at danger; when he is near, you breathe freely again. How near the Son of God has come to us! He is our Brother: He touches us, and we touch Him, at all points. III. HOW FAR OFF HE IS KEPT. "At the door." He in great kindness comes to the door; we in great folly keep Him at the door. The sunlight travels far from its source in the deep of heaven—so far, that though it can be expressed in figures, the imagination fails to take in the magnitude of the sum; but when the rays of light have travelled unimpeded so far, and come to the door of my eye, if I shut that door—a thin film of flesh—the light is kept out, and I remain in darkness. Alas! the light that travelled so far, and came so near—the Light that sought entrance into my heart, and that I kept out—was the Light of life! If I keep out that Light, I abide in

the darkness of death: there is no salvation in any other. IV. **HE KNOCKS FOR ENTRANCE.** It is more than the kindness of His coming and the patience of His waiting. Besides coming near, He calls aloud: He does not permit us to forget His presence. V. **MANY THINGS HINDER THE HEARING.** Other thoughts occupy the mind; other sounds occupy the ear. Either joy or grief may become a hindrance. The song of mirth and the wail of sorrow may both, by turns, drown the voice of that blessed Visitant who stands without and pleads for admission. VI. **HEAR, AND OPEN.** Hearing alone is not enough. It is not the wrath of God, but His mercy in Christ, that melts the iron fastenings and lifts up these shut gates, that the King of Glory may come in. The guilty refuse to open for Christ, even when they hear Him knocking. They have hard thoughts of Him. They think He comes to demand a righteousness which they cannot give, and to bind them over to the judgment because they cannot pay. God is love, and Christ is the outcome of His forgiving love to lost men. He comes to redeem you, and save you. It is when you know Him thus that you will open at His call. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

*The heavenly Stranger received:—*I. "IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE." 1. That the voice of Christ is either external or internal; or, that which is addressed to the senses only, and that which reaches the heart. 2. The internal voice of Christ is various, according to the different circumstances of the persons to whom it is directed. To some it is an awakening voice: it rouses them from their carnal security. To those who are bowed down with a sense of sin, and wounded with the fiery darts of Divine wrath, it is a healing and comforting voice. 3. In order to hear His voice aright, our hearts must be renewed. Dead sinners cannot hear the voice of Christ; but His is a life-giving voice, and what it commands it communicates. II. **AND OPEN THE DOOR.** III. "I WILL COME IN TO HIM." 1. Nearness. 2. Possession. 3. Inhabitation. He not only comes near to the soul to converse with it, but into it to dwell there, and becomes the vital principle of all holy obedience. IV. "AND I WILL SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME." (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

*The heart a house:—*Your heart is a house with many rooms; one apartment is decorated for the occupancy of pride; in another one covetousness may keep its iron safe; on the walls of another, perhaps, sensuality has hung some pictures that, if Christ enter, must be pulled down. Unbelief has chilled and darkened the whole house. Satan has a mortgage on the whole of it, and by and by will foreclose it. An enormous amount of sin has accumulated in every room and closet, for you have never had a "house-cleaning" since you were born. To that dwelling-place of sin, which may yet become a dwelling-place of endless anguish, my loving Saviour has come again. If you will stop the turmoil of business, or the noise of merriment long enough to listen, you will hear a marvellously sweet voice outside, "Behold, I stand here and knock; if thou wilt open this door I will come in." Christ without means guilt; Christ within means pardon. Christ without means condemnation; Christ within means salvation. Christ shut out means hell; Christ admitted is the first instalment of heaven. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

*Christ dwelling in the heart:—*A widow woman lives by herself in a little cottage by the seashore. Of all whom she loved, only one survives—a lad at sea; all the rest have passed "from sunshine to the sunless land." She has not set her eyes upon him for years. But her heart is full of him. She thinks of him by day, and dreams of him by night. His name is never missed out from her prayers. The winds speak about him; the stars speak about him; the waves speak about him, both in storm and calm. No one has difficulty in understanding how her boy dwells in her heart. Let that stand as a parable of what may be for every believer in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*J. Culross, D.D.*)

*He knocks at our heart:—*Jesus stands at our gate and knocks, and there are many who never open to Him at all, and many more who open the door but slightly. The latter, while they may receive blessing, yet miss the fulness of Divine revealing which would flood their souls with love; the former miss altogether the sweetest benediction of life. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

*Christ standing:—*Whilst a man is standing He is going. (*J. Trapp.*)

*Many fastenings to the sinner's heart:—*When we were in Dublin, I went out one morning to an early meeting, and I found the servants had not opened the front door. So I pulled back a bolt, but I could not get the door open. Then I turned a key, but the door would not open. Then I found there was another bolt at the top, then I found there was another bolt at the bottom. Still the door would not open. Then I found there was a bar, and then I found a night-lock. I found there were five or six different fastenings. I am afraid that door represents every sinner's heart. The door of his heart is locked, double-bolted, and barred. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The*

King slighted.—When your King and Lord comes to claim the homage of your hearts, and to pay you a royal visit, you receive His message with coldness and indifference. You treat Him as the people of Alsace and Lorraine treated the Emperor of Germany and the Crown Prince after the Franco-Prussian war, when they pulled down their blinds, and locked and bolted their doors, and sat in gloomy silence as the emperor passed. They had some excuse for refusing to see him, as they were a conquered people, and his presence reminded them of their humiliation and defeat. But there is no excuse for you. (*Isaac Marsden.*) *God respects man's freedom*.—It was said by a celebrated orator in the House of Lords a century ago, that an Englishman's house is his castle, that the winds of heaven might enter by every window, that the rains might penetrate through every cranny, but that not even the sovereign of the land dare enter into it, however humble, without its owner's permission. God treats you in the same way. He says, "Willingly open your heart to Me, and I will give you every blessing; but I must be made welcome." (*G. Warner.*) *At the door*.—In Holman Hunt's great picture called "The Light of the World," we see One with gentle, patient face, standing at a door, which is ivy-covered, as if long closed. He is girt with the priestly breastplate. He bears in His hand the lamp of truth. He stands and knocks. There is no answer, and He still stands and knocks. His eye tells of love; His face beams with yearning. You look closely and you perceive that there is no knob or latch on the outside of the door. It can be opened only from within. Do you not see the meaning? (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me.—The Christian raised to the throne of Christ.—I. "TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH"; THIS SUPPOSES A CONFLICT. 1. You must contend against yourself. The main battle is fought on the field of your own heart. Your closest foes are the affections which struggle there. 2. Allied with your heart and habits stands the world. God has so mercifully made us that we hail as a light upon our path the beam of kindness in the eye of a fellow man. Even this will be turned against you. 3. But self and the world are but visible weapons of an invisible hand. Behind them, setting their edge and thrusting them home, is your great adversary the devil. Watchful when you are drowsy, plotting when you are unsuspecting, laying snares when you are tripping heedlessly, bending the bow when you are exposing your breast, he is ever going about seeking to devour. II. HERE WE HAVE A PROMISE TO STIMULATE US TO OVERCOME. 1. Whatever this promise means, it must mean at least that the faithful Christian will be received into the immediate presence of his Lord. And this is a thought you must set well before you. 2. But as you linger on these words of promise your heart feels that they tell of more than merely of the abundant entrance. "I will grant to sit with Me in My throne." Ah! this seems, you think, to say that you shall be wondrously close to Him. 3. This seems to declare also that, if faithful, you shall share at last in the very honours which invest your adorable Head. 4. But, lingering still on this rich promise, your heart gathers from it another assurance, and one that to us in our struggles is wondrous sweet. "In His throne," you repeat, "in His throne," what foe can approach me there? In this wide world I can find no inviolable rest. But "on His throne," surely eternal repose dwells there. III. HERE YOU HAVE THE EXAMPLE SET BEFORE YOU FOR YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. Your Captain does not lead you to a warfare in which He is a stranger. You will meet no foe whom He has not met. 2. Consider, then, the example of Him who passed through every kind of temptation which can assail you, and in a degree of aggravation to which it is not possible that you should be liable. His victory is the pledge of yours, for His strength is your strength, and your only foes are His vanquished assailants. (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *The condition of celestial kingship*.—This is the promise of the ascended, victorious, crowned, and almighty Saviour to men whom He would have imitate and reproduce the life which He lived while upon the earth. This promise implies that life is a struggle with foes which assail it for the mastery. This truth has its illustrations in all forms and spheres of life. Many fail where one succeeds. The higher you rise in any sphere in life the smaller do the classes become. There are more Canadian thistles than Yosemite pines. There are more ants than eagles. There are more men who can read and write than can weigh the planets in scales and call them by name, paint a Madonna, build a Parthenon, write an epic. So there are more men who succeed in temporal pursuits than attain grand Christian characters and live a Christlike life. The first great truth implied in our text is, if men would

life that higher life which is governed by the principles of the gospel and in the eternal world sit down with their Lord and Master on His throne, they must resist the temptations which assail them, vanquish the foes which would destroy them. The dangers which beset each one in this life-battle are special. The rock on which your neighbour struck, the reef on which your friend lies stranded, may not imperil your safety because you are steering in another direction. There are men whose integrity money could not buy, in whose keeping the uncounted millions of the mints and treasury of the nations would be safe. But there are others who are ready at any moment to part with reputation, character, aye, sell their very souls for its possession. Take spirituous liquor. There are some to whom in any form it is as distasteful as vitriol, as poisonous as croton oil. There are others—God pity them!—in whom the appetite is so fierce, powerful, overmastering, that if they saw a glass of rum on one side of the mouth of hell, and they stood on the other side, they would leap across, at the risk of falling in, to get it. There are two things which differentiate and specialise each human being's danger. The first is natural constitution. No one denies the law of heredity, that physical resemblances, mental aptitudes, and moral qualities are transmissible, and sometimes travel down family and national lines for centuries. But while a man may inherit tainted blood and receive a legacy of disabilities from his progenitors, it does not relieve him from personal responsibility. What are the weak points in your character? In the presence of what temptations do you most easily surrender? Along what lines does your constitutional predisposition to wrongdoing lie? As you confront these weaknesses the command of the great Saviour of souls is, "Overcome." On this your salvation depends. The second thing which differentiates and specialises each man's peril is providential circumstances. John Stuart Mill was carefully trained by his father in childhood and boyhood in the principles of atheism. Young Mill had no voice in determining the character of his childhood instruction. But did that fact relieve the future philosopher of responsibility in adhering to and teaching others the principles of atheism? Your greatest peril may lie wrapped up in some providential event which you had no voice in shaping and which you must meet. It may be money. It may be family alliances. It may be social relationships. It may be a business crisis—such a business crisis as sometimes reveals the whole moral mechanism of the man. I know not whether your inherited qualities of mind and moral aptitudes are helps or hindrances to you in life's battle. I do not know the revealing tests to which a searching Providence may subject you. But I do know that special dangers lie along your pathway and menace your eternal well-being; dangers which you must conquer if you would enter yonder pearly gate and sit down with your Lord on His throne. The text affords glorious encouragement in the blessed assurance that it is possible for men in this life-battle to overcome. The success possible in the text rests on surer foundations than human resources or individual reserve power. It rests on the truthfulness and sincerity of Jesus. He does not mock men by laying down impossible conditions of salvation. That God is on the side of the man who is struggling to preserve his purity, maintain his integrity, and vanquish what is wrong both within him and without him, is a truth taught with increasing clearness from Eden to Calvary. Observe the greatness and grandeur of the reward of him who overcomes: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." Can you conceive of a greater incentive to be offered man than this promise of eternal participation in the regal splendours of heaven? Turning to the practical suggestions of this subject, notice that religion is a personal matter which has to do with individual character. Each one must overcome the obstacles which lie in his pathway. You can never understand how much Christ is to men until you realise your danger, feel your helplessness, and experience His saving power. You can never appreciate the towering sublimity of His peerless life until you attempt to walk in His footsteps and regulate your life by the same principles which controlled His life. The essence of the Christian religion is life, life shaped and controlled by supreme love to God and love for fellow-men equal to the love cherished for self. (*T. McCullagh, D.D.*) *The conqueror's reward*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN. It is that of a soldier—a successful soldier. His life is a warfare. It was such unquestionably in the days of the apostles. And what is the case now? The antipathy of the carnal mind may be restrained or softened by the influence of knowledge and the force of conviction, but the fact is still patent that we must take up our cross if we will win the crown. Our enemies within, whatever they may be without, are neither few nor weak. And to subvert our eternal salvation is the one thing in

which they are all united. We have, therefore, the greatest need of caution and courage. One thing must be ever borne in mind, namely, our constant dependence upon God. As long as we abide beneath the wing of Omnipotence we are secure.

II. THE REWARD WHICH SHALL BE ADJUDGED TO THE SUCCESSFUL WARRIOR. He shall sit down with the Saviour on His throne. 1. The promise may be understood to shadow forth the future dignity of the conquering Christian. He shall sit down with his Lord, and on the same throne. The faithful unto death shall thus be exalted above the angels of God. 2. The imagery in the promise is intended to indicate the future holiness of the saints. Wherever God is there is purity itself. 3. The promise before us is expressive of the future happiness of believers. There we shall behold a sky without a cloud, light without shadow, and flowers without a thorn. (*American National Preacher.*)

The victory and the crown:—I. THE BATTLE. Common life in this world is a warfare. 1. It is inner warfare, private, solitary, with no eye upon the warrior. 2. It is outer warfare. The enemies are legion. 3. It is daily warfare; not one great battle, but a multitude of battles. The enemy wearies not, ceases not, nor must we. 4. It is warfare not fought with human arms. 5. It is warfare in which we are sharers with Christ.

II. THE VICTORY. Here it is spoken of as one great final victory, but in reality it is a multitude. As are the battles so are the victories.

III. THE REWARD. 1. A throne. Not salvation merely, or life, but higher than these—glory, honour, dominion, and power. From being the lowest here they are made the highest hereafter. 2. Christ's throne. He has a seat on the Father's throne as the reward of His victory, we have a seat on His as the reward of ours. We are sharers or "partakers with Christ" in all things. We share His battles, His victories, His rewards, His cross, and His crown. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

The great victory:—I. A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN HOLINESS IS POSSIBLE. II. IT IS NOT TO BE SUSTAINED WITHOUT VIGOROUS AND PERSEVERING EFFORTS. 1. The natural inaptitude and aversion of the unrenewed heart to the things of God and eternal life. 2. The world is against us. 3. The life of man is often the scene of distress.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS TO A HOLY AND CHRISTIAN LIFE held out to us in the religion of Jesus are manifold and great. 1. In this arduous undertaking we are not left without assistance. 2. Multitudes of our fellow-men have already accomplished salvation, and are for ever with the Lord. 3. Whatever of warfare and pain may attend the Christian life they who maintain it are already the happiest of men. 4. Viewed aright it is matter of encouragement that the strife will soon be over. 5. What a vast reward awaits the faithful. (*Jas. Bromley.*)

The Christian conqueror:—The word used here for "conqueror" does not imply one who has conquered. It is literally, "He that is conquering I will give to him to sit with Me." While the battle is raging he shall have My peace, while he is but starting he shall be at the goal—as the boy has his prizes and his scholarships not because he is a finished scholar but because he is longing and learning to be one. And as this continues all through life to be the law of life, so in the kingdom that is coming effort is victory and victory is only encouragement. (*Abp. Benson.*)

Overcoming:—"To him that overcometh." There is a tendency very common which these words may be taken to warn us against—that of settling down to the daily round of our lives without appeal to anything high or holy in purpose. Do not listen for a moment to those who tell you that the struggle is not worth engaging in. "To him that overcometh." Men have tried different ways to accomplish this. A favourite way in the history of the early Christian Church was to withdraw actually from the world, to seek the solitude of some cave or monastery. Others who would think it very wrong to do this, spend the greater part of their leisure in attending religious meetings and reading their Bibles, and tell you that the chief end of man in this world is by these methods to prepare for the next. Both of these attempts to overcome the world are based on a misconception. The text says to us that we are to overcome the world even as I (Jesus) overcame. Now in what way did our Saviour overcome the world? Not after the manner of the religious ascetic. His life was in the main lived among ordinary men and women in the ordinary vocations of life. If the life of Jesus had been that of a hermit or a monk, He would never have been called a friend of publicans and sinners. If, again, He had been a constant attendant at religious meetings, noontide and evening, or had divided His life between keenness for this world's success in money-making and eagerness for the salvation of His soul for the next, He would never have been put to death. No, it was because He was so zealous to overcome the world—the world of religious selfishness and of worldly selfishness alike—it was because He was devoting Himself

amid the ordinary pursuits of life to bring about the kingdom of God. It is, of course, not to be forgotten that there are means, such as the reading of the Bible, attendance on public worship, prayer, and fellowship with those who are like-minded, which, if rightly used, will help us for the battle we have to fight. It is by forgetting that these are only means that men become hypocrites, and the form of religion becomes the all in all. When we realise what Christ meant by "the world" and what He meant by the kingdom of God, we will take a more enlightened view of what our duty is, and we will strive more eagerly to achieve the victory. Think of how many men and women are hindered from overcoming the world—that is, sin in all its forms—by the conditions under which they are made by a selfish society to live. How can men and women hope to realise the Christlike life if they are forced to toil from morning to night, and then to sleep in badly ventilated houses, only to rise again to the same round of unrelieved drudgery? Those who to-day are endeavouring to bring about a better state of affairs, who are trying to realise to some small degree that part of the kingdom of God which consists in better houses and more healthful surroundings for the toilers in our midst are doing quite as much to enable men to overcome the world—the world of vice, of drunkenness, of coarseness—as those who attend to what are considered more strictly the needs of the soul. There is another idea in the text: "To him that overcometh." That is the battle. The reward follows: "I will give him to sit down with Me in My throne." It was because Christ had so completely overcome—had so unreservedly rendered up His own will to the will of His Heavenly Father—that we find such a royal, kingly sense of self-conquest pervading His entire life. Jesus Christ could not have brought so much of the kingdom of God into this world, He could not have foreseen with so much confidence a time when it would be universally established, had He not had it reigning within Himself. Throughout His life there was an air of kingly majesty that makes Him as secure as if He sat and reigned upon a throne, while all around Him seemed to indicate defeat and disaster. Whence did this come but from His oneness with the Father? Whence can we hope to receive it but from the same high, never-failing source? (*W. Martin.*)

A commonwealth of kings:—When Cyneas, the ambassador of Pyrrhus, after his return from Rome, was asked by his master, "What he thought of the city and state," he answered, "that it seemed to him to be a state of none but great statesmen, and a commonwealth of kings." Such is heaven—no other than a parliament of emperors, a commonwealth of kings: every humble faithful soul in that kingdom is co-heir with Christ, hath a robe of honour, and a sceptre of power, and a throne of majesty, and a crown of glory. (*J. Spencer.*)

The future dominion of victors:—"So you intend to be a reformer of men's morals, young man," said an aged peer to Wilberforce. "That," and he pointed to a picture of the crucifixion, "that is the end of reformers." "Is it? I have read in an old Book this, 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.' That is the end, not death, but dominion. And if we be faithful, doing our duty, the end shall not be exhaustion, but 'sit with Me on My throne.'" (*Sunday School Chronicle.*)

The Christian promise of empire:—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne." These words bear the stamp of their environment. They were written at a time when the ideal of all men was the possession of a throne. Alike to the Roman and to the Jew the dream of life was the dream of dominion. The son of Israel contemplated his Messiah who should make him ruler over all nations. The son of Rome was eager to complete his almost finished work of universal empire. But from another point of view it was in striking contrast to both. Who were the men that claimed to be the recipients of this promise? A band of obscure slaves. To the proud Roman leading his armies to victory, to the proud Jew counting his ancestors by hundreds, there must have been something almost grotesque in the claim. Must it not to the age in which they lived have appeared the presumption of insanity? Nor is it only to a Roman age that the claim of this passage seems to suggest the idea of presumption. Must it not appear so at all times to every man? The throne, as I have said, is a throne of judgment. How can any human soul aspire to such a seat? Is not the state of the Christian one of humility? Does not the amount of the humility increase in proportion as the Christianity grows? Have not the most purely spiritual souls been precisely those most conscious of their sin? It is in the incipient stages of the Christian life that we find ambition. But let us look deeper. I think we shall find that we have altogether mistaken the meaning of the passage, and that the John of the Apocalypse is nowhere more like the John

of the Gospel than in his present claim to Christian empire. So far from being influenced by the old feeling of presumption, he is actuated by the direct desire to avoid that feeling. His position is that, instead of being presumption to claim a seat on God's judgment throne, it is presumption that prevents the Church of Laodicea from having a right to claim it. If that Church would adopt more humility, it would be more entitled to a place on the throne. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." What is the state of mind here indicated? It is poverty unconscious of itself. It is the description of a Church which has no elements of strength within it, but which believes itself to be strong just because it has never been tried. Accordingly in verse 18 He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." Nothing could reveal the weakness but exposure to the fire. And first, let us consider that, as a matter of fact, every man has seated himself on a throne of judgment. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is not the occupation of a throne. It is that the occupation of the one is legal, and the occupation of the other usurped. Every man by nature has constituted himself the judge of other men. But to all such the seer of Patmos exclaims, "Come down from that throne; you have no right to be there; you have not overcome." He tells them that until they have felt the temptations of their own nature they are in no condition to judge others. Now, the next question is, what would be the effect of what is here called overcoming—of vanquishing the temptation? It would clearly be to transform a throne of judgment into a throne of grace. For, be it observed, the value of overcoming is not the victory but the struggle. There are two ways in which a man may reach freedom from temptation—by innocence or by virtue, by never having known or by having known and vanquished. If mere freedom from temptation were the goal, we ought to be content with the first. What makes the overcoming better than the innocence is the fact that in struggle we learn our weakness, and that in learning our weakness the throne of judgment becomes a throne of mercy. And now the passage takes a remarkable turn. To the inspired ear of the seer of Patmos the Christ who offers the conditions of empire is heard declaring that He Himself has reached empire by conforming to these conditions, "even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His throne." There is something startling here. There seems at first sight to be no analogy between the case of Christ and the case of ordinary men. Now, Jesus was tempted; that is one of the cardinal features of the gospel. He was tempted in such a way as to make Him feel the inherent weakness of humanity; that is one of the cardinal features of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But He was tempted also "without sin." The idea clearly is that His right to judge others rests morally on the fact of His own struggle—the struggle with the thought of death. In His dealings with man He acknowledges no power but the sympathetic. And what is the root of universal sympathy? Is it not universal experience? If I would have sympathy with all nations, I must know experimentally the weakness with which all nations contend. Jesus emerges from the conflict with death wider in His human capabilities, stronger in His hold on man. He is able to promise rest to the labouring and the heavy-laden because He has known a kindred labour and felt an analogous ladenness. He has made the law of the Christian life the law of His own spirit: "I also have overcome, and am set down with My Father on His throne." (*George Matheson, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. Hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.—*The Spirit speaking to the Church*:—I. THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN GREAT MORAL ELEMENTS BY WHICH ALONE WE CAN DETERMINE THE CHARACTER OF INDIVIDUALS OR OF COMMUNITIES. II. THAT IN PROPORTION TO THE DEPTH AND VITALITY OF HOLY CHARACTER WILL BE THE STRUGGLE WITH ERROR AND WITH EVIL. III. THAT THE REWARDS AND HONOURS OF THE HEAVENLY STATE WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE STRUGGLES AND THE CONQUESTS OF EARTH. (*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*) *Visible Churches warned*:—1. Let me warn all who are living only for the world to take heed what they are doing. You are enemies to Christ, though you may not know it. 2. Let me warn all formalists and self-righteous people to take heed that they are not deceived. Where is your faith? Where are your evidences of a new heart? Where is the work of the Spirit? 3. Let me warn all careless members of Churches to beware lest they trifle their souls into hell. 4. Let me warn every one who wants to be saved not to be content with the world's standard of religion. 5. Let me warn every one who professes to be a believer in the Lord Jesus not to be content with a little religion. (*Bp. Ryle.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1-11. Behold, a door was opened in heaven.—The open door :—I. THE OPEN DOOR. 1. The place where the open door was seen: "In heaven." This implies several important things. (1) The changed sphere of operation. (a) The "golden lampstands" represented Churches, not in heaven, but on earth. (b) The "seven stars" represented the pastors of those Churches. (c) Now the seer's attention is called from the condition of things on earth to a condition of things in heaven. This is fruitful of suggestion. (2) That the door is represented as "open" is noticeable. (a) That now, for the first time, heaven is to be laid open to saints on earth. (b) That now these heavenly things, as here revealed, should be prayerfully pondered: an open door, ever inviting entrance. (3) Though this is a vision of the heavenly world, the objects seen are symbols; the things symbolised are as real as heaven itself is real. **II. THE INVITATION:** "Come up hither." 1. The authoritative character of the invitation. The speaker is no less than the risen Lord. 2. The distinguished honour of the invitation. 3. The gracious purpose of the invitation. (1) These "things" contain the substance of the Divine purposes concerning the destiny both of the people and the enemies of God. (2) These purposes had never been disclosed till now. (3) They are purposes in which all God's people should take a lively interest. **III. THE SEER'S TRANSFORMATION.** 1. Its suddenness. 2. Its significance. **IV. THE SUBLIME VISION.** Practical lessons: 1. The great importance of the study of the laws of "prophetic symbols." 2. The symbols of this chapter are not only interesting as throwing light on the place this chapter occupies in the prophetic scheme of this book, but they are also full of practical value. (1) They should impress us profoundly with the awe-inspiring presentation of the majesty, sovereignty, and holiness of God, whose name we should revere. (2) They should deeply impress us with the Divine activity, and the multiplicity of Divine agents in the bringing about the Divine purposes concerning the children of men. (3) They should impress us with the faithfulness of God, and the sure reward of those who love and serve Him on earth. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *A door opened in heaven :—I. A DOOR OF INTERCOURSE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.* A door of intercourse was virtually opened in the covenant of grace, when the sacred persons of the Divine Trinity entered into solemn compact that the chosen should be redeemed, that an offering should be presented by which sin should be atoned for and God's broken law should be vindicated. In that covenant council chamber where the sacred Three combined to plan the salvation, a door was virtually opened in heaven, and it was through that door that the saints who lived and died before the coming of Christ passed into their rest. But the door was actually and evidently opened when our Lord Jesus came down to the sons of men to sojourn in their flesh. There is no little comfort in the belief that heaven's gates are opened, because then our prayers, broken-winged as they are, shall enter there. The ports of the glory-land are not blockaded; we have access by Jesus Christ unto the Father; and there is free trade with heaven for poor broken-hearted sinners. **II. A DOOR OF OBSERVATION.** 1. A door is opened in heaven whenever we are elevated by the help of God's Spirit to high thoughts of the glory of God. Sometimes by investigating the works of nature we obtain a glimpse of the infinite. More often by beholding the grace and mercy revealed in Jesus Christ our hearts are warmed towards that blessed One who made us, who sustains us, who redeemed us, to whom we owe all things. 2. A door is opened in heaven whenever the meditative spirit is able to perceive Christ Jesus with some degree of clearness. 3. We sometimes get a door opened in heaven when we enjoy the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls. 4. A door is often opened in heaven in the joys of Christian worship. Yes, but if it be sweet to-day to mingle now with Christians in their praise and prayer, when we are so soon to separate and go our way, how passing sweet that place must be where the saints meet in eternal session of worship, the King ever with them, &c. 5. Another door is opened in heaven in the fellowship which we enjoy with the saints on earth. 6. A door has often been opened in heaven to us at the communion table. Astronomers select the best spots for observatories; they like elevated places which are free from traffic, so that their instruments may not quiver with the rumbling of wheels; they prefer also to be away from the smoke of manufacturing towns, that they may discern the orbs of heaven more clearly. Surely if any one place is fitter to be an observatory for a heaven-mind than another, it is the table of communion. 7. Another door that is opened in heaven is the delights of know-

ledge. The philosopher rejoices as he tracks some recondite law of nature to its source; but to hunt out a gospel truth, to track the real meaning of a text of Scripture, to get some fresh light upon one of the offices of the Redeemer, to see a precious type stand out with a fresh meaning, to get to know Him and the power of His resurrection experimentally; oh! this is happiness. 8. Another door of heaven may be found in the sweets of victory. I mean not the world's victory, where there are garments rolled in blood, but I refer to victory over sin, self, and Satan. III. A DOOR OF ENTRANCE. Christian, the message will soon come to thee, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Soon, I say, that door will open; surely you do not want to postpone the day. What is there amiss between you and your Husband that you wish to tarry away from Him? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A door in heaven.*—I. THE NEARNESS OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD. We are at its "door." Heaven is simply that which is heaved up. An uplifted life. We are always on the threshold of the pure, the noble, the blessed. II. THE POSSIBLE REVELATION OF HEAVEN. It is not merely near and closed against us. It is near, and may be known. A door into it may be opened. 1. The Bible is such a door. 2. The death of good men is such a door. 3. The life of Christ is such a door. 4. Our own best experience is such a door. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Heaven near, though hidden.*—This passage derives intense interest from its position as well as from its terms; for it occurs at the close of one group of scenes and at the beginning of another. My text, then, forms the transition between the earthly and the heavenly pictures. There is something striking, surely, in this sudden contrast, for the former chapters contain the most emphatic references to this present life of conflict and of sadness. They speak to those whose dwelling is "where Satan's seat is"; they speak of their labour and their patience, their tribulation and their poverty. "Watch, repent, hold fast, overcome," are the solemn, stirring words urged repeatedly on those addressed. How well we can understand their position, for it is our own! Instructed by the glorified Son of Man, the apostle saw and wrote those things. But "after this," he says, "I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven," and through that open door he saw a sight how different. In place of the strife and tears and guilty stains which he saw before there was perfect splendour, sanctity, and bliss. He saw God's throne with its rainbow emblem of mercy, &c. How complete the contrast between that world above and this world below, described before. I propose now to regard this transition passage as suggesting some relations between these two separated worlds. I. THE DIVISION BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN. 1. The fact that heaven and earth are divided by so wide a gulf seems to me one of the strangest facts in our experience, though long habit prevents the strangeness from striking us so much. We should have expected the very opposite. Comparatively few cross the Atlantic to America, yet, though we may never see it, we require no act of faith to realise its existence and condition. But the world of heaven is so far removed beyond the range of our knowledge that we have need of faith to be convinced even that it exists. The material universe has been called the garment of God, and so far it reveals Him; but it hides Him too. Little can be said in explanation of our exclusion from all direct knowledge of the unseen world and God; but that little springs out of the very things which make it strange. If heaven were not invisible, if God sometimes appeared, the chief trial of our present life would be removed, and we should have perfect assurance instead of wavering faith. Our life, in fact, would cease to be the discipline which it is at present. His wisdom appoints that we walk by faith, not by sight; no wonder, then, that all the arrangements of our life are in keeping with this purpose. Moreover, to this separation of earth from heaven we may observe several analogies, *e.g.*, as a thoughtful writer has pointed out, the material universe might have been one great plain allowing of the freest intercourse between its countless inhabitants, instead of which it is broken up into myriads of globes, divided from each other by abysses of space impassable to those who inhabit them. We are separated from the dwellers in Jupiter or Sirius (if such there are) as completely as we are separated from the dwellers in heaven. And note how the same policy is carried out even on earth. Two-thirds of the surface of our globe is water; vast oceans separate us from the inhabitants of America or Japan almost as entirely as if they lived on another planet. Nay, the majority of even English people are and will remain perfect strangers to us. Moreover, the periods of time contribute to this end as well as the expanse of space, for how entirely we are cut off from intercourse with those who lived in the past, and we are still more completely divided from future generations, and we come into contact with only a few of the people who are now living. Now

these facts show that it is God's will to break up His vast family into little groups, in order, perhaps, that each individual may, in comparative seclusion, be tried by the mystery of existence, instead of finding many of its problems solved by the combined experiences of all. All this is in keeping with the strange division between heaven and earth. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN. One point of connection between the two, which at least helps to make heaven seem nearer to us, is that life in heaven, just as much as our life here, is proceeding now. We cannot see, indeed, that bright and holy world for which we yearn, as we should like to do, but there are those who do see it, who do enjoy it now. Their bliss is a present feeling arising from the presence of God now. Their endless life runs along a parallel course to our transient life. The present, which we call time, they call eternity. We cannot see them or hear of them, for there is a great division between earth and heaven, but there is a real connection, too, since those we love are present with the Lord, and are now receiving and returning the love of Christ, whom they "see as He is." But there is a deeper lying connection between the two than this. We mourn over God's absence from our earth, but what would earth be without Him? "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." And the angels from whom we are so divided, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" So far from being independent of and forgotten by God, it is true rather that all we see and all we are was made and is upheld by God's ever present power, and the ministrations of His angels. And if nature's laws are God's will, it may be said also that human history is the evolution of His providence. Individuals and nations, with all their wild and reckless freedom, do but accomplish what God's hand and God's counsel determined before to be done. We may trace this on the large scale when we note, in the Bible history, how God's purposes have been wrought out by men, though we often cannot trace it in the narrow region of our own observations. But if God is present in the great, we may be sure He is present in the little, of which the great is made up. In history and in nature, too, we see effects, an endless tangled chain of them, but causes we do not see and cannot find out. Causes, forces, are beyond our reach, for there is a great division between earth and heaven. Ours is a God who hides Himself. But as we must believe that without these indiscoverable forces the universe would cease to be, so we believe that all depends upon the unseen God. Earth and heaven, then, are divided by a gulf we cannot pass, but the connection between the two is nothing short of complete dependence. III. THE DOOR IS SET OPEN BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN. The division is maintained between the two in order that our discipline may not cease. But sometimes the door is opened that our faith may not fail. That has happened "at those sundry times and in divers manners when God spake unto the fathers by the prophets." And in later days there was a still more wonderful exception. The door was opened wider, and, attended by a train of angels singing "glory in the highest," the Son of God passed through, and dwelt among us, and men beheld His glory. And whenever a Christian pilgrim reaches his journey's end, then, too, it may be said that the door between earth and heaven is set open to let the wanderer pass into his home. How close, then, heaven is to earth in spite of the separation, for at any moment the transit may be made. In yet another sense we may say that to us on earth a door is opened in heaven, and that is when we worship. The prayers and praises to which we give utterance on earth pass that strange division between earth and heaven which we cannot cross, and mingle with the nobler worship of the temple above, making us one with friends already there. (T. M. Herbert, M.A.) *The heavenly vision of the soul*:—I. THE SOUL HAS THE ABILITY TO PERCEIVE HEAVENLY VISIONS. 1. Man has the ability to look into the world around him—in nature, in society, in the nation. 2. Man has the ability to look into the world within him. It would be well for the moral life of men if they would enter more frequently into the chamber of the heart, and inspect the sentiments and energies reigning there. 3. Man has the ability to look into the world above him. This is his noblest ability. It brings into requisition the keen eye of a Divinely-enlightened soul. This vision is sublime, captivating, inspiring, elevating. II. THE SOUL HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PERCEIVE HEAVENLY VISIONS. God allows man to gaze into the mysteries of the life above. Kings do not often give men free access to their presence-chamber. Here we see the love of God, in that He reveals the unseen to the race; His wisdom in that He casts a little light upon the problems of futurity. This opportunity is the most frequently given: 1. To men in lonely sorrow (Rev. i. 9, Ezek. i. 1). Men can see a long way through tears. 2. To men in humble duty (Matt. iii. 16). 3. To men in dying circumstances

(Acts vii. 55). III. THE SOUL IS CALLED BY MANY VOICES TO RISE TO HEAVENLY VISION. 1. It is called by the voice of God as heard in Scripture; by the voice of Christ, whose earthly life was one continued gaze into heaven; by the Holy Spirit, who purifies the life of the soul that it may be capable of celestial vision. 2. The soul must ascend to heavenly vision. Elevated above flesh, above the world, above reason, even to faith. IV. THE SOUL OBTAINS ITS TRUEST KNOWLEDGE OF FUTURE DESTINIES FROM ITS HEAVENLY VISION. 1. From the heavenly vision men learn that all human events are under the wise providence of God. 2. From the heavenly vision men learn wisely to estimate the passing events of life. 3. From the heavenly vision men learn calmly to wait the destinies of the future. Lessons: (1) Learn in all things to look heavenward. (2) Seek to rise morally to the level of heavenly vision. (3) Learn to read history in the light of clear prophecy. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Heaven near*:—1. The reality of a heavenly world, and of its concern and connection with this. That world has its inhabitants, its plans and its purposes, its presences and its agencies, even like this. The subjects of its chief deliberations are the interests and the fortunes, the events and the destinies, of this lower world. 2. What an astonishment would it be to any one of us, to see that door into heaven suddenly opened! Oh, what a marvel, what a confusion, what a discomfiture, must it be to a worldly man or to a sinner to find at the moment of death that this thing which we have so long seen and handled, in which we have so long lived and moved, was not, after all, the whole or the chief part of that which is! 3. To Christian persons, to those, that is, who mourn for sin, and renounce and forsake it, and trust in Christ only, and pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit to make them and keep them His, it ought to be and will be a real comfort to remember that just inside that door there is a heaven, and a throne set, and a God seated thereon, and a holy and loving council gathered, and plans under preparation for purposes of good to the poor struggling and suffering people below; and that round the throne is the covenant bow, promising evermore a clear shining after rain, and pledging the very faithfulness of God to their final rescue and deliverance. 4. Life and death, things present as well as things to come, accident and disease, want and age; yes, things more outward still, the bread and the water, the fire and the covering, the judgments of sword and famine and pestilence, the mercies of dew and rain and fruitful seasons; all are God's, all are Christ's; and if God's, if Christ's, then the Christian's too (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). Oh, what an antidote to life's cares, for those who can use it! It springs from the fact that creation itself, in all its parts, rational and irrational, has its representatives before the throne in heaven, and ascribes the glory, the honour, and the strength to Him who sits upon the throne. 5. But if the thought of the four living beings which typify creation has something of comfort for us in reference to the world above, how much more that of men of our own flesh and likeness, who are already clad in the robes of priesthood, and admitted to the sight of God and to the ministrations of the heavenly temple! That world is not all peopled with strange and unknown forms. 6. Are our faces and our feet set heavenwards? (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Heavenward*:—1. After the first vision, John gets a second, which shows that God continues and multiplies His favours on the godly, who make a good use thereof, and are desirous of more. 2. He looked, and was not disappointed; neither shall any be who looks up to God for grace, or growth of heavenly knowledge. 3. He could not see till a door was open to him; neither will we ever see heavenly mysteries till the Lord opens the door of our mind and heart (Luke xxiv. 45; Acts xvi. 14). 4. This and the other visions were seen in heaven; which shows that all that falls out on earth is first decreed in heaven, and the future to us is ever present to God. 5. The first voice that talked with John was as a trumpet; and so is the trumpet of the law the first voice that talks with a sinner for his conversion (Isa. lviii. 1). 6. John is bidden come up thither; to show that the knowledge of heavenly things requires a heavenly and elevated mind. 7. This also shows that we should have God's warrant for all our doings, and be bidden do what we do. 8. God only is able to foretell all future things, because He is omniscient, and determines the event thereof, which is a great comfort to His own elect; therefore it is said here, "I will show thee," &c. 9. This also is for their warning, that trials and troubles must be; and also for the comfort, that their delivery must be, and shall be in like manner. (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*) *The vision of the throne*:—I. THE TIME, AND MANNER, IN WHICH THIS SECOND VISION WAS GIVEN TO JOHN. 1. The time. "After this I looked." He looks up for a vision. He is prepared and looking for a further revelation. Those who have seen heavenly things once will

look twice. Oh, how much nearer than we commonly imagine, faith borders upon sight, and the spiritual upon the heavenly state! 2. The manner in which the vision was brought under the notice of John. (1) He saw a door open in heaven. He says not an open door merely, but a door that had been opened. It had not been always open. It had been once closed. A door opened in heaven signified to John that more of the counsels of heaven were about to be revealed. The door of the Church was closed against him, the door of ministerial usefulness was closed, the door of liberty, and every door of human hospitality, but a door was opened in heaven. In proportion as the people of God are precluded from the world, they have intercourse with heaven. They find readiness of access above, when hemmed in around; as water pressed on all sides rises in a fountain. To Isaiah visions were given in affliction, to Jeremiah in prison, to Ezekiel in captivity, to John in exile. This appearance to John may have been emblematical, in some degree, of renewed supplies of the Spirit of prophecy. In allusion to the manna which descended round the camp of the Israelites, God is said to have "opened the doors of heaven." In Malachi you have these words: "Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing." Compare this with "the heavens opened, and the Spirit descending" upon Christ at His baptism, and the descent of the Spirit upon the apostles and the primitive Churches. (2) John informs us of what he heard. The tones of this voice were encouraging to John, and expressive at once of its design. (3) John tells us what he felt on this occasion. Heaven is first opened by God to sinful man. It is opened by His mercy, not by our prayers. We love Him because He first loved us. Having opened a door He invites us to come, and promises rich manifestations of His wisdom and grace to our souls. But how can we come to Him? How rise to the door of heaven? By the power that invites us. The invitation guarantees the ability to act, and the promise ensures success. II. THE FIRST TWO OBJECTS IN THIS VISION. (*G. Rogers.*)

The vision of the throne:—I. THE OPENING OF THE SCENE. II. THE DIVINE THRONE. 1. The nature of the throne. There is a manifold throne attributed to God: there is a throne of grace and mercy, of glory and majesty, of dominion and sovereignty. 2. The properties of the throne. These are great and manifold. It is a throne high and lifted up; it is Divine, supreme, and universal; it is infinite, eternal, and immutable; it is from everlasting to everlasting; it is eternal in its date, and endless in duration; it has neither beginning nor end, succession nor change. 3. The position of the throne. It is "set in heaven." The throne of judgment, the great white throne, is placed in the clouds; the throne of grace is erected in the Church; the throne of glory is placed within the vail; the throne of the universe is placed in the heavens (*Isa. lxvi. 1*). 4. The stability of the throne. It is "established in the heavens." It is ordered and arranged, guarded and disposed by infinite wisdom and unerring skill. It is firmly fixed, stable, and immutable. III. THE POSSESSOR OF THE THRONE: "One sat upon the throne." He sits on the throne, in a state of deep repose, undisturbed felicity, and eternal blessedness. IV. THE MAJESTY OF THE THRONE. This is represented by two sacred emblems—sitting and similitude. He sat upon the throne, and He was to look upon like three sacred stones. 1. Here we behold the fulness of the Divine perfections. He is possessed of infinite, eternal, and immutable excellence—He is the source, the centre, and the sum of all worth and glory. 2. Here we behold the variety of Divine perfections: "I am the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering," &c. 3. Here we behold the unity of Divine perfection. All these perfections are displayed in Immanuel, who is the image of the invisible God. V. THE MERCY OF THE THRONE. 1. The history of the rainbow is very remarkable. We first find it in the clouds; then established in the heavens, as the faithful witness of God's eternal truth (*Psa. lxxxix. 39*). It forms the glorious diadem of the angel of the covenant (*Rev. x. 1*); and in the verse before us it forms the gracious canopy of God the Father's throne. 2. The rainbow round the throne was the blessed symbol of God's glory and perfections; it was the token of His love, the emblem of His mercy, and the pledge of His faithfulness, His counsel and His covenant. 3. The position of the rainbow: "The rainbow was round about the throne." It surrounds the seat of Divine majesty, above, below, and on every side. The majesty of Deity, the glories of the Godhead, and the splendours of the Trinity all beam benignantly through the rainbow of the covenant. 4. The likeness of the rainbow: "It was in sight like unto an emerald." Amid the varied hues blended in the rainbow, green is the prevailing; and the colour of

the emerald is a deep, living green. (1) The comparison implies the beauty of the covenant. God beholds His people enrobed in all the beauties of the rainbow, and the deep, living loveliness of the glowing emerald. (2) It also implies the riches of the covenant. (3) It likewise supposes the perpetuity of the covenant. The rainbow, like the emerald, is ever fresh and green. (4) The comparison teaches the unity and variety of the blessings of the covenant. VI. THE ATTENDANTS ON THE THRONE. 1. Their names. They are called "elders." This is the sign of their age, their honourable office, and dignified condition; their wisdom, experience, and venerable character. 2. The number of the elders: "They are four and twenty." There is an enlargement of the Church implied in the number. He was then the God of Israel, but He is now the God of the whole earth. 3. Their posture and position: "There were four and twenty seats." The saints sometimes stand; but here the elders sit, the emblem of dignity and undisturbed felicity, dominion and authority, rest and holy happiness, and their great reward. 4. Their glorious clothing: "They were clothed in white raiment." White robes are beautiful, they are Zion's loveliest garments—white robes are excellent, they form the best robe—white raiment is resplendent, it is both white and shining. 5. Their golden crowns: "They had on their heads crowns of gold." VII. THE TERRORS OF THE THRONE. (*Jas. Young.*) The first voice . . . as it were of a trumpet.—*Trumpet voices talking with us*:—I. REVELATIONS ARE MADE TO US OF GREAT AND SOLEMN REALITIES. What a world this would be if there were no voices from heaven, no Divine utterances, no spiritual revelations, to meet our needs and our questionings! We have a gospel not of figures but of facts, a gospel symbolised by the priest blowing the trumpet over the sacrifice, by the blast of the trumpet through the length and breadth of the land, ushering in the year of jubilee, by the great trumpet which was blown, that men in exile and ready to perish might return to their own land. II. THE REVELATIONS MADE TO US ARE PRESENT AND PERSONAL. We hear a voice talking with us (Heb. i. 1, 2). The voice of Christ is reproduced in every believing and loving heart. His words do not die, they are still spirit and life. Revelation is not a dead, imprisoned truth, but a living fountain, the streams are as bright and pure as they were yesterday. III. THE REVELATIONS TO WHICH WE LISTEN ARE OFTEN TRUMPET-TONED. Those voices have been trumpet-toned that have uttered great truths in this world; truths that yet live in it, speak in it, rule in it. Those voices have been trumpet-toned that have uttered the watchwords of liberty, that have raised the war-cry round which men have rallied, and which have stirred their souls like the blast of a trumpet. The voices that come to us in revelation are trumpet-toned, in their earnestness, in their importance. In our personal history there have been dispensations of Providence, that have been "as the voice of a trumpet talking with us." How clear and distinct the voice that came to us in the season of sickness, in the hour of temptation, when death entered our home, &c. There is a sense in which we find it true, that the "first voice" we hear is "as of a trumpet talking with us." We hear the awful words of the Divine law in the depths of our souls, and are convinced of our sinfulness and become conscious of our unrighteousness. IV. THESE REVELATIONS CONDUCE TO OUR SPIRITUALITY. "Immediately I was in the Spirit." A man must be in the Spirit to see the glory that streams through the opened door in heaven, to see the throne and Him that sits on it, to see the sign of the covenant of peace, &c. If the windows of our hearts are opened towards Jerusalem, we shall sometimes see the light and glory of that golden city. The design of the sanctuary, of the Sabbath, of ordinances and sacraments, is our spirituality. (*H. J. Bevis.*) Come up hither.—*An invitation to glory*:—I. THE PLACE TO WHICH WE ARE INVITED—"HITHER." Geographers, geologists, and travellers have described the earth, its islands, continents, mountains, rivers, plains, and products; but heaven is a domain beyond all merely scientific research. What we know of it is from revelation alone. 1. It will be a place exempt from ignorance. Seated there, we shall know as we are known; our views of things will not be as "through a glass, darkly," "but face to face," and in the highest sense we shall "have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." 2. It will be free from all kinds of evil. (1) No slavery will be there. All its sons, of whatever clime, are freeborn. All are without shackle, brand, or chain. All walk at liberty. (2) No sin will be there. The imagination will never conceive an unholy thought, the lips never utter a corrupt speech, nor the judgment, the conscience, the will stoop to an unholy action. (3) No famine will be there. The bread is enough and to spare. The supply of fruit from the tree of life is constant and abundant. (4) No tears, sorrows, pains, or death will be there. 3. Then there

is nothing wanting to complete its happiness. (1) There are great possessions. (2) The society there is most blessed. (3) The joys there are lasting. (4) The life there is everlasting. II. THE INVITATION ITSELF—"COME UP HITHER." 1. There is a way to reach this place. (1) What road to heaven is wrong? (a) Sin is the wrong road. (b) Self-righteousness is the wrong road. (2) What road is right? In Virginia, in South America, and other parts, there are natural bridges of solid rock, whose stupendous arches join mountains together, and make a path firm and safe over the rolling rivers and dashing torrents beneath them. But there is no natural bridge to heaven. There was once, but man broke it down by sin. But there is still a path for man, formed by the Son of God—a path formed by His blood and righteousness. Along this path our pious fathers travelled and never found it give way, nor shall we. It is the path that leads from guilt to mercy, depravity to holiness, earth to glory. 2. Then the invitation also implies you cannot reach the place unless it be obeyed. Heaven in the gospel is set before men as an open door. It is not Christ that closes it, but unbelief. Let this be gone. (*S. Fisher.*) *Element of the ideal*:—The standpoint from which God views everything is vastly different from that which men commonly regard as their standpoint. God is for quality, clearness of vision and fundamental principles; man too often for mere quantity, haphazard vision, superficial estimates. God is ever seeking to draw man up to His level, man thinks to reduce the things of God to his convenient level, from which he hopes, without much trouble, or even thinking, to form some opinion or gain some knowledge of that which, in the deeper moments of his nature, he knows to be of vital and eternal importance. The higher the standards are the more must energy strive to reach them. It is a vastly different thing to brave the Matterhorn or Mont Blanc, or those gigantic mountains which rear their heads heavenward and lose their summits in the clouds. Climbing them means the hardest kind of toil and steadfast courage. Our standards determine the height of our aspirations, our aspirations press us on in the climbing and furnish the impetus to the outreach of our faith and courage, but they must be fed by God, who leads us to His own standard and bids us look up and beyond, even beyond the material, into the realms of the spiritual, with a faith that does not shrink from the lessons such leadings bring. The question of questions is, Do we see, do we behold these high level truths of God? or have we so little interest in beholding that we skim them over, as we do the pages of a book that has proved uninteresting? John says, "After this I looked and, behold." God can never do anything for a man who is blind, unless open his eyes; but God will not do anything for a man who wants to be blind. Looking shows desire. Beholding suggests power. John saw, and behold a door was opened in heaven and the first voice which he heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with him, which said, "Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." That seems to us to be a beautiful but exceptional sight. Picture John's lonely exile life on Patmos. There did not seem to be much for him to live for, shut out and away from the busy work of life, and perhaps we have a theory that God was very gracious to him for that very reason. But such visions always come to souls that can see—long to see—and needing the blessing of such a vision. Whatever the outward life, the inner life is the condition of beholding. Lives need to be broadened and exalted. Heaven is not only to make life more tolerable, but life is to determine heaven. The vision came not to the place, but the soul, and was determined not by the meagreness of the surrounding, but by the condition of the heart-life of him who beheld. By every analysis we are to know, then, that life is not in itself either omnipotent, or satisfying, or self-sufficient, nor has it any high standard, nor is it enough to be merely practical—doing without seeing, deeds without visions. God gives us to see what we are, in order that we may see by the aid of this revelation what we may become. Ignorance is simply fatal to all progress and enlightenment. "And immediately I was in the spirit," John says. The thought for us is this: the power that exalts life is of God and comes from above. Look above, then, though you walk the earth. Open your heart and mind and soul to the unseen realities of the eternal. Higher and higher we must go and grow, like the vine upon the trellis, abiding in the branch, lifting its myriad shoots towards the summer shining and the clear, pure air. From His standpoint, God will give us to see what must be hereafter. Our privilege is to hear God's blessed invitation, "Come up hither, higher, to higher altitudes, with waiting, expectant attitude." God help us to break the spell that keeps us down; God help us to unlock the bolts that shut us in; God help us to fling aside the shutters that keep

us in the dimness; God help us to be as free as His truth makes us, and then, when we truly behold, how beautiful everything will grow. Just as the little child, long blind, having at last her sight restored, said to her mother, as she looked for the first time upon the beauty of nature, "How beautiful! Why didn't you tell me how beautiful everything was!" The element of the ideal must occupy a large place in our practical life if we are to grow at all strong, buoyant, and symmetrical. Visions are not mere air castles. Some one has said, "All men who have shown our race how great things are possible have had their inspiration in dreaming of the impossible." The vision changes and goes on changing, adapting itself to our need and our life, but the reality always remains. Visions, therefore, are the wings which bear us upward and aloft. You do not have to teach a bird how to fly. The soul, saved by the power of the Divine Christ, rises because it can; it ascends because it has within it the irresistible yearning to do so, and faith and hope give impetus. This is the revelation which is constantly coming to your life, to my life. God help us, above all, to be "in the Spirit," as in meditative quietness of life we steadfastly watch for and behold the visions that come to us. The cross and visions of the Christ are the inspiring themes of the Christian life. Life is truly potent, as we see its lines shaped according to the Cross of the Lord Jesus, as the symbol of our salvation and the standard of our service. Look and live, then live and look, is the whole of the Christian life. Let us not be satisfied with plodding, but let us be climbing. Let our lives take on daily newer beauty, the beauty of holiness, which is the adornment of righteousness. (*C. E. Eberman.*)

Soul elevation:—Of course it was not the bodily senses of John that were thus addressed—not the body that was commanded to ascend. His outward eye saw not the material heavens open. Elevation of soul, then, is our subject. What is it? First, is it the elevation of sensuous excitement? The souls of all men have great variation of mood. Sometimes they are buoyant and sometimes sluggish. Such souls often soar aloft on the pinions of an excited imagination, but in their own fancy they indulge in a kind of spiritual reverie, and find a heaven for the hour upon the mountain heights of their own creation. But this is not what we mean by elevation of soul. Secondly, is it elevation of intellect? Is it the elevation which arises from study and culture? This is important, this is essential to soul elevation; but this is not it. Some of the greatest and most cultured intellects have often been found in alliance with souls deeply sunk in passion, depravity, and vice. It may be represented as consisting in three things: 1. An uplifting sense of the Divine favour. 2. An uplifting sense of moral right. 3. An uplifting sense of the spiritual world. I. THAT SOUL ELEVATION IS ATTAINABLE. The apostle saw "a door open in heaven." Christ is this "door." By His teaching, His death, and His ascension, He has opened the new and living way for man into the "holy of holies." 1. He is the exclusive door for man's spiritual elevation. 2. He is the door for man's spiritual elevation, and man's only. 3. He is the door for man's spiritual elevation available only for him on earth. II. THAT SOUL ELEVATION IS OBLIGATORY. "Come up hither." 1. I hear this Divine command sounding in the starry firmament. The great universe is the domain of mind. "Come up hither," immortal man, wing your flight from orb to orb, system to system; count our multitudes, mark our movements, gauge our dimensions, bathe in our brightness, rise beyond us, scale the wondrous heavens still far away, revel in the Infinite, be lost in God! 2. I hear the Divine command sounding through the biography of the sainted dead. Our nature speaks from heaven. There are the voices of the goodly fellowship of prophets and apostles, of the glorious army of martyrs and confessors, &c. There are the voices of our favourite authors, the sacted poet, the holy sage and the learned divine. 3. I hear this Divine command sounding through the gospel of Christ. 4. I hear this Divine command sounding in the depths of our higher nature. Reason and conscience unite in urging us to ascend, &c. III. THAT SOUL ELEVATION IS DESIRABLE. 1. Man's happiness is greatly dependent upon bright prospects of the future. 2. Those bright prospects are secured by soul elevation. (*Homilist.*)

The upward call:—Suppose that I had gone away from here for years, and came back to find my daughter living in some low, obscure place, bound out to hard labour. Suppose my son were in another place, half-clothed, half-fed, and suffering all manner of ill-treatment. And thus with all my children. What should I be likely to do? Should I not at once set about lifting them out of such situations, and getting them up where I was? I should say to them, "Come up, my children; you were not born to live down there. Your place is where I am."

Come up here to me; here is where you belong." Well, this is what God is doing to men. He has a few, a very few, children living in the high places of spiritual life—those regions of hope and love where He Himself dwells. "Come up hither—come up into the region of warmth and love, where your Father dwells. You were not made to live down there. This is where you belong. Come up hither." (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Heaven our home*:—It is said of Anaxagoras, the philosopher, that one night when in the act of studying the stars, his countrymen came to confer upon him an inheritance, in token of their appreciation of his genius. His reply was, "I wish it not—these heavens are my country." Can we say the same in a grander, Diviner sense?

Vers. 2-5. **A throne was set in heaven.**—*The majestic government of the great God*:—I. THE MAJESTIC GOVERNMENT OF THE GREAT GOD HAS HEAVEN FOR THE CHIEF SCENE OF ITS ADMINISTRATION. 1. When a good man is privileged to look into heaven, the first thing that attracts his attention is the majestic government of God. 2. Earth does not contain the supreme power of law, but is under the government of heaven. 3. The government of God is in sublime contrast to that which obtains amongst men. (1) Firm in stability. (2) Great in majesty. (3) Constant in exercise. (4) Calm in triumph. II. THE MAJESTIC GOVERNMENT OF THE GREAT GOD IS CONDUCTED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF PURITY, EQUITY, AND MERCY. 1. It is pure in its administration. The aim of His rule is to subdue moral evil, and to permeate life with laws, the observance of which will sanctify it. This cannot be predicated of all human governments, which are often gained by the sword, and upheld by terror. 2. It is righteous in its administration. Under it the poor and the oppressed may take welcome refuge. 3. It is merciful in its administration. III. THE MAJESTIC GOVERNMENT OF THE GREAT GOD IS APPROVED BY ALL REDEEMED AND GLORIFIED INTELLIGENCES. 1. In exalted station. 2. In peaceful posture. 3. Of unswerving purity. IV. THE MAJESTIC GOVERNMENT OF THE GREAT GOD IS SOMETIMES ASSOCIATED WITH TERRIFIC AGENCIES. The judgments of God are as—1. The crash of thunder. 2. The blaze of forked lightning. 3. Not only thunderings and lightnings, but voices proceeded out of the throne; the meanings of Divine judgments are partially unfolded; all judgment is vocal to the soul of man. Lessons: 1. That God rules all things by the word of His power. 2. That the Church is safe under the Divine rule. 3. That men must not provoke the terrible agencies of the government of God. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The throne of God*:—I. THE THRONE OF GOD IS THE THRONE OF UNIVERSAL NATURE AND PROVIDENCE. 1. He superintends all the affairs of His creatures. 2. He governs all by the sceptre of His power. II. THE THRONE OF GOD IS THE THRONE OF MERCY AND GRACE. 1. His throne of grace has its foundation in justice and holiness. 2. The throne of grace is accessible to all. III. THE THRONE OF GOD IS THE THRONE OF JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT. 1. God deals justly with impenitent sinners in this world. 2. God will eventually appear in general judgment on all mankind. IV. THE THRONE OF GOD IS THE THRONE OF GLORY AND OF BLESSEDNESS. 1. It is a throne of glory. God is the King of glory (*Psa. xxiv. 10*). His throne is a throne of glory (*Jer. xiv. 21*); a "glorious high throne, the throne of our God" (*Jer. xvii. 12*). 2. It is a throne of bliss. There the wondrous assembly are beyond every evil, and above every imperfection; they enjoy without any interruption the beatific vision of God, manifested in the person of Christ. (*Pulpit Studies.*) *The Triune God*:—I. THE THRONE. 1. Above all the strife and discord and confusion of this world, above those thrones and dominions which caricature royalty and pervert justice, above the Neros and Domitians and all their brood of lesser tyrants, there is a dominion, an authority, a throne which is supreme. The world is not without a Ruler; it is not rolling on from age to age, like a ship without a pilot; it has a Guide, a King, whose eternal throne is established on high. 2. The majestic repose and ethereal majesty of the throne of God. But before the throne of God is "a sea of glass"—image of calmness and repose; a sea whose smooth surface is never ruffled, whose transparent depths are never disturbed. II. THE MONARCH. III. THE HYMNS OF PRAISE. (*R. H. McKim, D.D.*) *The throne in heaven and its surroundings*:—It is a curious fact that the last book of the Bible is, upon the whole, the most mysterious. It has been said that John Calvin evinced his wisdom by declining to write an exposition of this book. To a great extent the book is prophetic; but other parts are doctrinal, and these it is our privilege to endeavour to understand. I. THE THRONE ITSELF. "Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat upon it." St. John's vision in Patmos reminds us of the vision of Micaiah in the reign of Jehoshaphat. "I saw the

Lord," says he, "sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right hand and on His left." This part of the chapter may be considered as bringing before us the sovereignty of the Lord God Almighty. God is no epicurean, taking no interest in the welfare of His creatures: God is King of all the earth. His sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. To acknowledge the existence of a God is, in point of fact, to acknowledge the supremacy of His reign. Having created all things He governs all things. 1. The sovereignty of God is universal in its extent. "His kingdom ruleth over all"—over angels, men, and devils, over the good and the bad, over birds and beasts and creeping things, over mountains and mole-hills, storms and sunshine, peace and war, plague and pestilence, abundance and famine, great events and little ones. All are subservient to His governance and submissive to His power. 2. The sovereignty of God is not only universal in its extent, but is also independent and absolute. "As He receives His essence from none so He derives His dominion from none," says old Stephen Charnock. His right to reign has not been won by war, or obtained by bribery: it is not the bequest of some predecessor or the gift of some superior. He is not a King by the votes of the vassals whom He governs, but by His own eternal excellence and by His own omnific acts. As a sovereign whose dominion is absolute you see Him continuously sustaining creation when He might, in an instant, suffer it to relapse into its primeval nothingness. You see Him redeeming men, promulgating laws, instituting rites, and appointing conditions, without the observance of which sinners cannot be saved. "He doeth according to His will." 3. Let me add that whilst the government of God is universal and absolute, it is not tyrannical, but wise and pure and just and good. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him" often, but at all times "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." His throne is a throne of holiness. We may often be puzzled by His proceedings: we ought never to murmur and malign. I would remind you of the fearful position of the man who dares to rebel against such a King. Of all the creatures in God Almighty's wide creation, except the lost in hell, man is the only one in whose heart lurks rebellion. Woe to the man that strives against his Maker! Pharaoh ventured to do that until Pharaoh and his legions sank in helplessness just at the moment when they were anticipating victory. Nebuchadnezzar set himself against God, the result being that Nebuchadnezzar became a wild and wandering maniac. Man cannot sin against such a sovereign as this with impunity, without his sin entailing punishment sooner or later. Do not forget that you are not your own and, therefore, you have no right to live for your own aggrandisement and gratification. God governs the universe. Yes, and let us not forget that God our Governor is infinite in greatness and also in goodness, and if so, then in our direst emergencies we may venture safely to repose trust in Him. We may be mean and miserable, but do not forget that God's sovereignty takes cognisance of everything God's power has made. If there is nothing too little for God to make, there is nothing too little for God to govern.

II. Leaving the throne itself, LOOK AT THE RAINBOW WHICH SPANS IT. "There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The rainbow round about the throne naturally leads us to contemplate God as entering into a covenant engagement with man. Glorious is the fact that God not only rules as a sovereign, but in infinite condescension He has made covenants with His creatures which He cannot break. "I will make a covenant of peace with thee," says God by the prophet Ezekiel, "and it shall be an everlasting covenant." Oh, how infinite is condescension like this! God the uncreated, the infinite, the all-perfect Being exercising universal sovereignty, binds Himself by promises to bless. Man makes leagues and covenants, and then snaps them asunder at his pleasure. God's covenants and compacts, like Himself, are unchangeable. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of My peace be broken." Oh, for faith in these compacts which God has made with man! After daily trusting in covenants made by mortals like yourselves, will you dare to call in question the truthfulness of compacts God has made? God promises me a pardon through Jesus Christ if I seek it in penitence and faith. Shall I question God's readiness to fulfil that promise? God promises finally a mansion, a throne; and shall I doubt His readiness and His ability to fulfil His covenant? Did He fail me when I came to Him a burdened penitent for the pardon of my sins? Patriarchs, prophets, and others believed the covenant not because they had seen it verified, but simply because God's own living lips had uttered it; and, if so, shall I, with the experience of six thousand years before me,

dare to doubt it? God forbid! III. Leaving the rainbow which spans the throne, let us go, in the third place, to THE LIGHTNINGS AND THUNDERINGS AND VOICES COMING OUT OF IT (ver. 3). The lightnings and thunderings and voices coming out of the throne bring us a step farther in the history of the Divine Being, and leads us to contemplate Him as a great Lawgiver—a Lawgiver issuing precepts for the guidance and discipline of man's probationary being. This part of the chapter reminds us of the scene which was witnessed on Mount Sinai, as you will find if you turn to the 19th chapter of Exodus, beginning at the 16th verse. Oh, that we could make you unconverted sinners to feel in the presence of this legislative God as these Hebrews did! Let me say that in order to be saved you must first of all, to some extent at least, have an experience like that to which I am now adverting. Do not imagine that you are in a fit frame of mind to come and ask God for pardon until you feel the terrors of that God whose laws were published on Mount Sinai in sounds and voices so terrific. Issuing from the legislative mount, thunders and voices and flashing lightning scare them, and they are made willing to be saved on any terms, at any sacrifice. IV. I pass to the fourth point, namely, THE SEA OF GLASS AND THE SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE BEFORE THE THRONE (vers. 5, 6). I will simply say that by the sea of glass we are reminded of a text in the Book of Exodus—the 38th chapter, beginning at the 17th verse: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass," &c. Accordingly, we are told in the 8th verse of the 38th chapter of Exodus, that Moses made a laver of brass of the brazen looking-glasses presented by the women. Then, again, you will remember that when Solomon built his temple, he also made a similar laver capable of containing twenty-two thousand gallons, and he designated that laver a molten sea. It is intended to typify the provision that has been made for the sanctification of sinners in the sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ. Then as respects the seven lamps of fire which are the seven spirits of God, I have as little doubt that that is symbolical language intended to signify the sanctifying agency of the Holy Ghost. I will just remind you that the word "seven" in the Scriptures is a sacred number, and is often used in the same sense as the word "perfection." The word "horn" is often used to signify authority, power; the word "eye" to signify intelligence, wisdom, light. Now blend all these things together, and then you learn from these symbolical texts that the Spirit of Christ is possessed of perfect wisdom and perfect power, and is sent forth into all the earth. Apply all that to the Holy Ghost, and you will find it strictly true. The Holy Ghost is an all-perfect Spirit. He is the Spirit of the Son as well as of the Father, and He is sent forth into all the earth, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. We have just now been reminded, by the lightnings and thunderings and voices coming out of the throne, of the law which God published in the days of Moses, and of our transgression of that law, and of our need of a Mediator to obtain for us pardon and purity. And here, in the sea of glass and in the seven lamps of fire, our necessities are fully met. In the blood of the Mediator atonement is made for our transgressions, and in the agency of the Holy Ghost provision is made for the removal of our darkness and depravity and sin. As a sinner exposed to the wrath of God—"Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" How shall I gain access to His mercy-seat? How shall I enter the tabernacle in which He dwells? Before Moses and Aaron were allowed to avail themselves of bliss like this they had to wash in the brazen sea; and I also must wash in the sea of glass, or, in other words, in that fountain which has been opened in the House of David for sin and for uncleanness. Without the blood there is no admission into heaven, just as without the molten sea there was no admission into the temple's most holy place; and without the Spirit we are without the wish to wash in the cleansing blood, and, in point of fact, despise it. V. And now, as a result of the whole, let us look at THE HOLY ONES BY WHICH THE THRONE, SET AND ESTABLISHED IN THE HEAVENS, IS SURROUNDED. "And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." Good old James Kershaw, one of John Wesley's itinerant preachers, lays it down with authority that these elders—these grand seniors of heaven, as he calls them, mean the four-and-twenty elders or presbyters from the patriarchal age, from Adam to Jacob, and including Job and Melchizedek. I am not going to controvert it, but there are one or two other kindred interpretations, perhaps, equally to be commended; for instance, some of you are well aware that king David divided the Jewish priests into twenty-four divisions, and at the head of each division placed a prince or chief

priest; and some think that when the text speaks of four-and-twenty elders, there is a reference to these twenty-four priests or princes of the priests belonging to the Jewish Church. Another interpretation says that the four-and-twenty elders are intended to signify the heads of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and that these twenty-four constitute the elders of the Jewish and Christian Churches united. Any one of them will serve my present purpose, namely, to show that as a consequence of God's care of His creatures, and of His sovereignty, and of His covenant engagements, and of His legislative acts, and of His redeeming mercy—as a consequence of this, I find men in heaven—men who were once sinners. All this has a tendency to strengthen our confidence and our faith in God—in His ability and willingness to bring us safe to the realms of blessedness and peace. (*Luke Tyerman.*)

A rainbow round about the throne.—*The circle rainbow*:—A semi-circle rainbow is all that presents itself to our vision, and that is often a very imperfect half. We see things in this world only by halves. Imperfection characterises all our powers, and limitation all surrounding objects, and incompleteness all our pleasures. "The things that shall be hereafter" shall be in circles, complete and perfect. I. THE CIRCLE OF PROMISE. II. THE CIRCLE OF TRUTH. The ancient philosophers perplexed themselves in their search after truth. They failed to see that while truth is a perfect circle, it is not visible as a whole to mortals. "We know in part, and prophesy in part." In other words, we know but a small part of truth, and can teach only the part we know. What shall be said when we ascend to the higher plane of truth? If such the earthy, what of the heavenly? But we shall yet know in full. Hereafter the whole circle shall be unfolded. Then our knowledge shall be perfected.

III. THE CIRCLE OF PROVIDENCE. The wisdom of God is best judged of by the view of the harmony of providence. The single threads may seem very weak, or knotty and uneven, and seem to administer just occasion of censure; but will it not as much raise the admiration to see them all woven into a curious piece of branched work? (*A London Minister.*) *The rainbow round about the throne*:—I. LET US VIEW THE NATURE, AND SCRIPTURAL HISTORY, OF THE RAINBOW. II. THE RAINBOW IS PRESENTED TO OUR NOTICE AS CONNECTED WITH THE MOST SPLENDID REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DIVINE GLORY. There are three instances of this in the Scriptures. 1. The first is Ezekiel i. 28. Here is an evident reference to Jehovah, as governing all things in the person of His Son, of which mention is made in ver. 26 as having the appearance of a man. And it is in and through Christ that Jehovah treats with mankind, and by whom He directs and upholds all things both in heaven and earth.

2. The second instance is our text, where the Godhead, high and lifted up on His holy throne, and surrounded by the worshipping hosts, is represented as encircled with "a rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald." This evidently intimates the gracious connection subsisting between God and man; and that however elevated and glorious He may be, yet His grandeur and majesty are made to act in blessed concert with the arrangements of grace. 3. The last representation of the rainbow is Rev. x. 1, where we are taught that however Jehovah may step forth, arrayed in garments of terror, or however black the dispensations of His providence may appear, yet that His head is ever adorned with the rainbow of grace, and that as such He will ever be recognised by all those who love and put their trust in Him; that while He is the destroyer of His impenitent enemies, He is the unchanging friend and consolation of His people. III. A STRIKING SYMBOL OF GOD'S GRACIOUS REGARDS TO OUR FALLEN WORLD. 1. The rainbow is turned up towards heaven—is unstrung—and without arrows. And here we have a representation, or symbol, of God's being in a state of perfect reconciliation to our world. 2. In the rainbow is exhibited the union of the various prismatic colours. A beautiful symbol of the harmony of the Divine perfections in the economy of Divine grace. 3. The rainbow appears to reach the heavens. Symbolical of the origin of all the blessings of grace. 4. The rainbow seems to unite both heaven and earth. And this union is truly effected in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. 5. The rainbow is all God's work. Man has no part in making it. So with respect to our salvation; all is of God from first to last. 6. This rainbow is said to be "round about the throne" of God, indicating that all His attributes and perfections are under its influence. 7. This rainbow is likened to an "emerald." The meaning of which is, that the beautiful green colour of the emerald was the leading appearance it presented. So when the awakened sinner beholds the rigour of Divine justice in its most awful form, even at this moment the Divine compassion is most apparent, and demands the most implicit confidence. 8. The unmerited

freeness of Divine mercy. So salvation is not of debt but of grace. 9. The unspeakable delight which the sight of this rainbow excited. 10. Look upon the rainbow, and praise Him that made it. 11. Let the mourning penitent look at the bow, and be encouraged. 12. Let the troubled soul look and be comforted. (*R. Simpson, M.A.*)

The rainbow of the covenant:—I. IT IS ONLY BY THE COVENANT OF GRACE AND PEACE, REVEALED TO US IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, THAT WE CAN CONTEMPLATE, WITH CALM SERENITY, THE ATTRIBUTES AND PERFECTIONS OF GÓD. II. IT IS ONLY BY THE COVENANT OF GRACE AND PEACE, REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL, THAT WE CAN CONTEMPLATE WITH SATISFACTION AND COMFORT THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE. III. IT IS, IN ALL PROBABILITY, ONLY THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE COVENANT, BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED FROM PERDITION, THAT WE SHALL BEHOLD AND ADORE THE GLORY OF GOD, IN THE MANSIONS OF CELESTIAL BLISS. 1. Consider the perfections of God, as they shine in the person and work of Christ, the Mediator and Redeemer. 2. Consider the dispensations of Providence in their connection with the covenant of grace and peace. 3. Consider the glory which shall be disclosed to you in a future, eternal world. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

The rainbow:—I. IS THE RAINBOW A REFLECTION OF THE RAYS OF THE SUN UPON A THIN WATERY CLOUD? The covenant of grace owes all its excellences to Jesus Christ, the "Sun of righteousness." II. ARE OUR MINDS STRUCK WITH THE DIVERSIFIED COLOURS OF THIS BEAUTIFUL PHENOMENON IN NATURE? Let them remind us of the numerous blessings which are treasured up in the everlasting covenant. III. WAS THE RAINBOW AN EMBLEM OF PEACE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN AFTER THE FLOOD? The covenant of grace declares reconciliation, and secures the redeemed for ever from the deep waters of affliction, which had often before overwhelmed them. IV. IS THE RAINBOW SAID TO BE ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE OF GOD? The covenant of grace includes in it, and glorifies all the Persons in the Trinity, and is ever in their sight and remembrance. V. ARE WE INFORMED THAT THE RAINBOW WAS IN SIGHT "LIKE UNTO AN EMERALD," green, beautiful, and durable? How delightful to contemplate and enjoy the blessings of the covenant of grace! It is always new, and lasting as the throne which it surrounds. (*T. Spencer.*)

The throne and the rainbow.—I. First, let us look up at this wonderful throne. Of course, we understand such a thing to be the symbol of GOVERNMENT—of the Divine government in the universe—for that Being in the seat of royalty is God. But what do the other emblems mean? 1. Observe that the exalted Monarch is said to be "like a jasper and a sardine stone." See the supreme advantage we have in knowing that we are under a splendid and sufficient government in this world of ours, where all appears so confused and independent. I confess my mind grows restful and glad when I look up and seem to see this dazzling diamond of infinite perfection subduing itself to my weak comprehension till it looks like a carnelian, which I gaze upon constantly and yet live. 2. Then, next to this, observe in like manner the attendants which are represented as forming the King's retinue: "And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones," &c. Here again is a disclosure upon which it will cheer the Christian's heart to dwell. This is more than a splendid government; it must be amazingly potent and irresistibly strong. The very nobles are crowned, and wear royal raiment: their ordinary seats are thrones. 3. But does God know what His wicked and wilful creatures are doing so far away from His presence? That leads us forward another step in the vision, and we observe that this must be a very watchful government; the language is quite peculiar: there was "before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal," &c. We cannot delay to examine in turn every one of these interesting symbols. It must be enough to say that the lion is the chief of wild beasts, as the ox is the chief of those tamed and domestic; the eagle is the king of the air, and man is the monarch among created things; each is sovereign and supreme of his kind, for the Lord God could receive no less into His court for His servants. But the main particular to notice in this description is the suggestion—here twice made—that they were all "full of eyes," and the floor beneath the throne was of glass as transparent as crystal. "And thou sayest, how doth God know? can He judge through the dark cloud?" But now this vision teaches that earth can always and everywhere be seen from heaven. 4. Observe, once more, that this is an unimpeachable government. These living creatures are worshipping while watching: "they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy," &c. No one can know better than those nearest to a monarch how pure he is. This King in the throne never broke one of His promises, never deceived one of His subjects, never forgot one of His creatures in its time of possible need. II. Thus much does this first symbol in the vision teach. Now we come to study the second; the "rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald." This represents a COVENANT,

as the other represented a rule. 1. Observe first, that the ancient covenant of reaction has in it the promise of the covenant of grace. This is Noah's bow repeated with fresh and better engagements for John. 2. Notice again, that its appearance just here in John's vision is welcomed more for its graciousness than for its antiquity. No one can read the Bible without noticing more and more plainly that the God of nature desires to transfer the allegiance of His creatures so that they may fully recognise Him as the God of grace. 3. Once more: observe how well this vision teaches us that God's covenant is completed. A perfect circle is the finest figure we could imagine of the covenant of God's love fully complete. 4. The symbols here employed seem to teach that this is an abiding covenant: it will stand for ever. In oriental countries green is the emblem of unchangeableness. It signifies fidelity, incorruptible and for ever to be trusted. 5. This covenant is to each of us individual and personal. Each beholder is the master and owner of his particular arch in the heavens. Thus it comes to pass that we are sure no two persons ever see the same iris even on the clouds of the same storm, though they are almost side by side in their outlook; for there are different drops which fall into the angle of range, and different sunbeams to touch them. Do not waste this conception in admiration of the beautiful phenomenon of nature. God's covenant is made with a generous distribution of grace, but to each reception and bestowment of favour there are only two parties—Himself and a single believer. III. Thus we reach the last point for our consideration; namely, the COLLOCATION of the two symbols. "The rainbow was round about the throne." 1. God's promise surrounds God's majesty. The ancient Rabbins used to render the verse in Genesis concerning the rainbow thus: "It shall be a sign between My word and all the earth." So now we look up at this vision of John, and we learn to rest in our Creator. We are not left to vague considerations of Jehovah's consistency with His own character, or, as we sometimes phrase it, "His name"; we dwell upon His recorded language of blessing, "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name." The word is "round about" the name, the rainbow is round about the throne. 2. God's grace surrounds God's justice. We lift our eyes, and see this rainbow as really the most conspicuous thing in the vision. Its vast emerald arch shines all around the supreme tribunal on the floor of crystal. The suggestion is immediately clear, it is a comfort that we are now under the New Testament. 3. God's love surrounds God's power. Love is symbolised in the rainbow, and power in the throne; and the rainbow is round about the throne. 4. God's glory surrounds God's children. For just look up and see the position and collocation of these two objects; the emerald ring is all around the sapphire seat of royalty. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Rainbow and throne*:—I. THERE IS A RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE IN THE WORKS OF CREATION. In the threefold kingdom of nature the throne is conspicuously manifest, for authority and power are everywhere obvious. Law reigns permanent and supreme, and sometimes asserts itself with apparent severity and sternness. But there is a rainbow encircling the throne—for the storms that terrify produce in their train fertility and health. Processes that seem to produce death give birth to new life. Floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, tempest, &c., work upon the whole for the good of man. II. THERE IS A RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE IN THE PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD. In all God's dealings with man there have been blended mercy with judgment, forgiveness with chastisement. This is true of nations as well as of individuals. III. THERE IS A RAINBOW ABOUT THE THRONE IN THE SCENE THAT WAS ENACTED AT CALVARY. In the death of Christ—the sinless One—the throne of authority and righteousness is unveiled; but the rainbow encircled the head of the suffering Redeemer; on the Cross mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. IV. THERE IS A RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF GOD. The glad tidings of salvation proclaim God's righteous indignation against sin, and to some become "a savour of death unto death." The rainbow of the covenant of grace, full of exceeding great and precious promises, encircles that throne of authority, so that whosoever will may come and obtain pardon and peace. V. THERE IS A RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE IN THE PREDICTIONS OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. This vision of John gives us a guarantee: 1. Of the perpetuation of the evolution of the seasons in the world of nature. 2. Of the fulfilment of the promises contained in the covenant of grace. 3. Of the absolute safety of all who cling with deathless tenacity to the enthroned Redeemer. 4. Of the final accomplishment of God's gracious purposes in relation to our race. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The rainbow round the throne*:—The picture introduces us into the midst of the heavenly

world, and shows to us its enthroned Sovereign spanned with an arch of iridescent light, ineffable majesty blossoming out in forms of tender beauty, the beauty brightening the majesty, the majesty solemnising the beauty, Divine and eternal, and yet raying out into lines of genial and affectionate colour such as the eye can delight in, and the face and heart grow bright and cheerful under. There is the throne and there is the rainbow, the solemnity of the throne qualifies the rainbow and the rainbow qualifies the throne, and they make not two pictures, but one picture; the two features that customary thought divorces, the imagery marries in solid wedlock, and righteousness and peace are shown to have kissed each other. That is a wonderful answer that stands in the Westminster Assembly Shorter Catechism in response to the question, "What is God?" "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." That is a wonderful answer, but then it is not my God any more than putting arms, legs, trunk, and head alongside of one another compose my father. Considered as a schedule of detail, as a bill of Divine particulars, that answer cannot be surpassed, but it will have to yield instant precedence to the imagery of our verse when the object sought is not a God dissected in the interests of philosophy, but God whole, and entire, in the interests of love and worship. What I feel that I need for myself in my religious character and relations, is to be able to come to God in the entireness of His personality—come to Him, in that respect, in the same way in which a boy comes to his father. True personal approach combines into indistinguishable unity all those ingredients that to pure speculation stand separate and distinct. Now, that is the charm and the truth of the Apocalyptic picture in our text. It brings the solemn sovereignty of God and the sweet, accessible beauty and loveliness of God so into relation with each other, and so draws them through one another, that each quality is felt to inhere in the other, and one indivisible God to be the issue of it, all whose majesty is sweet, and all whose sweetness is majestic. You behold the rainbow about the throne, and you behold the throne by the light of the rainbow. The world is going to grow better by coming to know God better. What St. Paul said at Athens still holds, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." To help people to feel God as He is, is the one only comprehensive service that we can render them; and if the peculiar glimpse of God afforded us by this imagery of St. John once becomes an appreciated and a conscious truth with us, it will easily, not to say necessarily, work practical results in our theology and in our hearts and lives. Once let us feel, as John's picture suggests, that God all belongs together, that violence is done Him whenever any one of His attributes is plucked from its coherency with His other attributes, and we shall be saved from what has been the bane of all theology—namely, founding on some individual attribute which has been rudely dislocated from its companion attributes, taking the amputated member and electing it to be the vitals of a living system. Now, that makes theology easy, but it makes it a lie. The throne is a lie without the rainbow, and the rainbow is a lie without the throne. Now, that conducts directly to two schools of theologic thought. One starts with the solemnities of God, and the other starts with the amenities; they both make a bad start, and consequently they both make a bad finish. One begins with the majesty of God, and gets along as best it can with His love; the other starts with the love of God, and gets along as well as it can with His majesty. One gives us a solemn despot, and the other gives us a doting old grandfather. One is just as good as the other, and neither is good for anything so far as being a just statement of the truth is concerned. We often conceive of God as acting at one instant out of His pure mercy, as if His justice had for a time been put in a dark closet or gone off on a vacation, and that His mercy was the only attribute that had remained at home and that was doing all the work. Then, after mercy has worked until it is tired, we think of Him as putting that to sleep and letting everything for a time be managed at the arbitrament of unassisted justice. I venture to say that there is not among us the conception that, when God acts, He acts in the entireness of His being always, as He always does, and always will; that His justice and His mercy, for example, have no existence apart from each other; that He never surrenders Himself to a single impulse, has no pet attribute, but that all of Him is in everything that He does. (C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.)

*The rainbow a pledge of mercy:—*1. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE RAINBOW WAS GIVEN AS A SIGN TO MEN. 1. The Most High had proved His hatred of sin by the consuming wrath with which it had been punished. 3. The Lord had also recently accepted the sacrifice of Noah. 3. The rainbow appeared in heaven at the very time

when the patriarch's fears must have been renewed. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE COVENANT OF WHICH THE RAINBOW WAS THE APPOINTED PLEDGE. 1. The unmerited freeness of Divine mercy. 2. The faithfulness of God. 3. The infinite compassion of the Lord. 4. The universality of Divine mercy. 5. The perpetuity of redeeming mercy. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *The rainbow round the throne* :—I. THIS EMBLEM.

1. It tells us that God is in covenant with man. Such was the meaning of the rainbow in the time of Noah. The world, which had been taught so solemnly the terror of God's wrath, was now to learn the "riches of His goodness." But the covenant which God makes now is more gracious still—as much more, as the soul is more precious than the body, and things eternal more important than things temporal. And with whom is this covenant made? With all who will accept it: that is to say, with all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is the acceptance of the covenant. What a covenant!—well called "the covenant of grace." It includes, first, forgiveness; then, renewal of heart; then, preservation from sin; and finally, the eternal joy of the souls of believers. 2. Again, this covenant shows all the attributes of God together. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." How safe then the shelter of those who have an interest in this covenant: they are protected by the combined attributes of the eternal God! 3. By this covenant God binds Himself. Where is the rainbow? "Round about the throne." Majestic as He is, and just and holy, He is content to be bound—bound by His own word, His sure promise, His unchangeable covenant.

II. SOME CONFIRMATION OF THIS TRUTH. The doctrine of God's covenant of grace is not only clearly revealed in Scripture; it is also not opposed to reason. 1. There is nothing in it unworthy of Him. It is not a covenant of unjust severity—nor is it one of unjust mercy. Mercy there is in it—conspicuous mercy; but it is in harmonious alliance with holiness and equity and truth. What, then, is to hinder Him from carrying out the covenant of grace? Nothing! His sovereignty is free. 2. It is a covenant that promotes His glory. Practical lessons from the covenant of grace: 1. Here is joy for the believer. 2. Here, too, is encouragement for the inquirer. (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) *An emerald rainbow* :—I. THE RAINBOW. 1. Let us see in what respects the rainbow serves as an illustration of the covenant, and first—the rainbow is the child of the cloud and the sun. No sooner did man fall, and consequently the cloud gather, than the light which had been shining from before all time flew apace, and darting through the gloom, kissed with its golden rays the threatening cloud. In a moment there was a heavenly transformation, a belt of light encircled the cloud in the shape of that sweet promise given to our parents, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." 2. Mercy met misery, and the result was the covenant of grace. Man's depravity forms the dark background that throws up in glorious contrast the brightness of God's grace, but the covenant rests on other foundations. It is founded on the purposes of God, and although its sweet engagements are for man, they rest not on man; it is a covenant of "I will" and "thou shalt."

3. Again, the rainbow is an emblem of reconciliation and security. It was so to Noah. God has said, "I will look upon the bow"; well, then, do you look upon it too, for in that you are reconciled to Him with a reconciliation that He has declared shall never be broken. 4. The rainbow was God's handiwork. "I do set My bow in the cloud." So with the everlasting covenant of grace, from first to last it is God's. (1) It is His in conception. (2) It is His in provision. All that was necessary for its accomplishment has been provided by the same One who sketched the marvellous plan. (3) It is His also in execution. The power that convinces—the grace that draws—the faith that accepts—the peace that follows—the security that abides, are all, all of God. 5. This rainbow never melts. II. ITS POSITION. Round about the throne. 1. May not the fact of the rainbow being all round the throne teach that God in all His persons is included in the covenant of grace? It is a blessed truth that it is so. The covenant embraces the whole Trinity—not one of the Persons is omitted. The bow encircles the whole throne. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost all have their glorious part in the salvation of man by grace. 2. Being round the throne, it was always in view. I speak with reverence, but it was impossible for Him who sat upon the throne not to behold the rainbow—it was around Him on every side; its emerald hue would be ever attracting attention. John only saw Him who was like jasper through the bow, and He only looked upon John through the same hallowed medium. God only looks upon His people as they are in covenant relationship with himself. 3. As the rainbow was all round the throne, it follows that there is no coming unto God but through it. Sinner, wouldst thou be saved? Then thou must be saved by grace.

(A. G. Brown.) *The rainbow round about the throne*:—I. THE RAINBOW. 1. It proclaimed the fact of the Divine reconciliation. What! is the rainbow in the cloud the symbol of the God of peace? And can the rainbow round about the throne be the symbol of the God of wrath, the God of war? Nay, it bears the same import in both the one case and the other; and how, then, like the elders before the throne, should the new song be ever so much upon our lips at the sight, and even at the very thought, of it. 2. And then, in virtue of the Divine reconciliation, the rainbow further intimated that providence is administered under the reign of grace. 3. After all, the grand purpose of the rainbow was to seal or ratify the covenant of God. It is certain there cannot be a flood in presence of a rainbow. II. THE POSITION OF THE RAINBOW. The rainbow is round about the throne—not above, as dominating, or upon, as occupying, but round about, as encompassing the throne; and in this regard its position is as significantly instructive as it is itself. 1. It evidently carries us up to the Divine origin of the covenant. This covenant is most certainly of Divine authorship. It is an exclusively Divine product. The rainbow is made up of various intermediate elements, the eye, the sunshine, and the rain. But not the covenant. It is all God Himself. 2. This further intimates that the Divine majesty rules in the covenant throughout. Let us never suppose that God has abdicated His throne when He dispenses mercy, that He has laid aside His majesty when He exercises grace. 3. Once more, by the position of the rainbow, we are assured that the covenant will never pass from the Divine remembrance. III. THE ASPECT OF THE RAINBOW. The natural rainbow is of varied hue; but green is the prevailing colour in the rainbow round about the throne—here said to be “in sight like unto an emerald.” Now, let us observe why this rainbow has so much in it, not of heaven’s, but of earth’s colour, not sky-blue, but emerald-green. 1. It indicates that there is a refreshing beauty in the covenant which is never wearisome to look at. Some colours, even heaven’s own azure-blue, soon dazzle or fatigue the vision. The earth’s soft emerald-green never does. Hence the prevailing colour of this rainbow. To look at the throne, and Him who sits on it, in the fire-light resplendence of His holiness, “like a jasper and a sardine stone,” how can we do so without having our eyes, as it were, burned out? But with this emerald-green of covenant love and grace all round, how the sight of that very glory becomes a beatific vision. We see God and live. 2. And again, this emerald-green of the rainbow may be held to intimate that there is an essential unity in the covenant, whatever variety may circumstantially distinguish it. There is no rainbow without the sevenfold variety of the prismatic colours, yet these colours are all harmoniously blended together in its arch of beauty; at least, they are so blended together by the prevailing green of the rainbow round about the throne. And yet, again, the symbol is in this regard significant. There is a manifold variety of Divine promises and blessings which at sundry times and in divers manners have been given in sovereign manifestation from the throne; but they are all suffused with the one ever-permeating tint of grace, new covenant grace. 3. Yet, once again, the everlasting duration of the covenant may be said to be shadowed forth in the emerald aspect of “the rainbow round about the throne.” (E. A. Thomson.) *The rainbow round the throne*:—I. The obvious idea connected with a “throne” is that of POWER or dominion. It is the known public seat of legislation, government, and judgment, surrounded with all the pomp and circumstance of state ceremony and outward splendour. Before it the loyal are proud to bow in token of their homage. At its footstool the rebel is eager to fall prostrate, that he may sue for mercy. And from it the traitor hastens to flee lest his sentence of condemnation should be pronounced by the sovereign. Now let us carry these simple ideas to the interpretation of the symbol employed in the text. Conceive for a moment that the vision vouchsafed to the apostle were granted to you. How inconceivably exalted would your views of the Divine glory become! You would feel that power belongeth unto God! Let us consider how it is exalted by His other perfections. Omnipotence alone, if it were not guided by omniscience, would only be the source of unmeasured and inconceivable confusion and mercy. But “blessed,” says the prophet, “be the name of our God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.” Again, even this combination of attributes would not afford sufficient security for the happiness of His subjects, unless it were hallowed by the most perfect purity. But He is emphatically “the Holy One of Israel.” II. A second emblem connected with the former, which, whilst it detracts nothing from its glory, softens its splendours, and mitigates its terrors. “And there was a rainbow,” it is said, “round about the throne.” This is the symbol of

MERCY; and independently of its being God's own instituted type, it has a native significance which it is delightful to notice. The most striking feature in the natural rainbow is the skill in which its beauteous variety of colours is blended together. Have we not here a most exquisite emblem of the way in which the Divine attributes all harmonise together, whilst mercy, so to speak, is the emerald grace, and presents the prevailing and refreshing hue? What, to the sinner, is power without mercy but a sure pledge of his destruction. Infinite wisdom only closes the door against the possibility of escaping detection. Holiness banishes him for ever from the presence of Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," whilst justice records the sentence of His condemnation in characters of flame. But how blessed the change when "mercy and truth meet together—righteousness and peace kiss each other." The eternal wisdom is engaged to plan, almighty power to execute, the scheme of redemption—justice is appeased in the person of the sinner's surety—all guilt is removed, and perfect righteousness imputed through faith in the blood of atonement; and holiness itself is satisfied through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. But the most precious and important feature of the emblem is still unnoticed. It not merely tells of mercy, but covenant mercy; and was instituted as God's own sign for this very purpose. And blessed indeed are the provisions of that covenant! It tells no more of works of righteousness to be done by the sinner as the condition of his eternal salvation. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put My laws into their mind," &c. (C. F. Childe, M.A.)

Ver. 4. Upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting.—*The elders before the throne.*—I. THE STATE AND ENJOYMENTS OF THE SPIRITS BEFORE THE THRONE. 1. Mark, first, that the saints in heaven are represented as "elders," which we take to refer not merely to the office of the eldership as it is exercised among us, but rather to the fulness of growth of believers before the throne. The elders in the Church are those who by reason of years have had their senses exercised; they are not the saplings of the forest, but the well-rooted trees; they are not the blades of corn up-springing, but the full corn in the ear awaiting the reaper's sickle. As to the number—twenty-four. I think, as there were twenty-four courses of Levites, who were porters at the gate of the temple, and twenty-four courses of priests who offered sacrifice, so the number twenty-four is made use of to show that the service of God in His temple is complete, that every part of the Divine service will be taken up, and around that altar which smokes before God eternally there shall be a full complement of those who shall bow before Him, and do Him homage. 2. These elders are said to be around the throne. We suppose, as near as we can catch the thought of John, sitting in a semi-circle, as the Jewish Sanhedrin did around the Prince of Israel. "There is an equality among the saints." There shall not be some near the centre, and others far away on the verge of the wide circumference; but they shall all be near to Christ, all equally His favourites and His friends. 3. The elders are "clothed in white raiment." In this they are an example to us. Perfection we must not hope to see here; but oh, we must aim after it. 4. These elders exercised a priesthood. Indeed, their being clothed in white garments, while it is an emblem of their purity, also represents them as being priests unto God. "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests." They exercise the office of priesthood, as you perceive, by the double offering of prayer and praise. Let us look up to them as the priests of God, and then ask ourselves, are we celebrating His worship too? 5. They had on their heads crowns of gold. Now let us imitate them in this. "Oh!" say you, "but I cannot wear a crown as they do." Nevertheless, you are a king; for they who are Christ's are kings. Reign over thy sins. Reign over thy passions. Be as a king in the midst of all that would lead thee astray. In the world at large act a king's part. Let your liberality of spirit be right royal. Let your actions never be mean, sneaking, cowardly, dastardly. II. THE OCCUPATION AND SPIRIT OF THESE GLORIFIED ONES, AS THEY SHOULD BE IMITATED BY US BELOW. Notice their occupation. 1. First of all it is one of humility. "They fall down before Him" (ver. 10). The more holy, the more humble. 2. But as they fall before the throne in humility, you will note that they express their gratitude. It is said they cast their crowns before the throne. They know where they got them from, and they know to whom to ascribe the praise. 3. These elders spent their time in joyous song. "Thou art worthy to take the book." 4. These saints not only offered praise, but prayer. 5. I must not forget, however, here, that these elders before the throne were ready not only for prayer and praise, but

for all kinds of service. You remember there was one of them, when John wept, who said, "Weep not." Then there was another of the elders who said to John, for his instruction, "Who are these?" &c. Now those before the throne are willing to comfort the weeper or to instruct the ignorant. Let us do the same! and may it be ours to wipe the tear from many an eye, to chase the darkness of ignorance from many a young heart. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 6. **A sea of glass like unto crystal.**—*The spiritual navigator bound for the holy land:*—"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." I find hereof seven several expositions. 1. Some expound this glassy and crystal-like sea, of contemplative men. 2. Some conceive it to be an abundant understanding of the truth, a happy and excellent knowledge given to the saints, and that in a wonderful plenitude. 3. Some understand by this glassy sea like crystal, the fulness of all those gifts and graces which the Church derives from Christ. 4. Some intend this glassy sea like to crystal to signify the crystalline heaven, where the eternal God keeps His court and sits in His throne. 5. Some expositions give this sea for the gospel. And their opinion is probably deduced from the two attributes, glassy and crystalline. (1) The first expresseth a bright and clear matter. Which sets a difference betwixt that legal and this evangelical sea. That was dusky and shadowy matter, not penetrable to the sight. This is a sea of glass, more clear and transparent. (2) Crystalline is the other attribute. Now as the other attribute takes from the gospel all obscurity, so this takes from it all impurity. 6. Some by this glassy and crystal sea conceived to be meant baptism, prefigured by that Red Sea (Exod. xiv.). The accordance of the type and antitype stands thus: as none of the children of Israel entered the terrestrial Caanan but by passing the Red Sea, so, ordinarily, no Christian enters the celestial Caanan but through this glassy sea. The laver of regeneration is that sea, wherein we must all wash. 7. Lastly, others affirm that by this glassy sea is meant the world. This being the most general and most probable opinion, on it I purpose to build my subsequent discourse. A special reason to induce me I derive from Rev. xv. 2, where the saints, having passed the dangers of the glassy sea—all the perils of this slippery world—and now setting their triumphant feet on the shores of happiness, they sing a victorious song. Now for further confirmation of this opinion, in the third verse, the exultation which they sing is called the song of Moses the servant of God. So that it seems directly to answer in a sweet allusion to the delivery of Israel from the Egyptians. Our adversaries like theirs, our dangers like theirs, our warfare like theirs; but the country we sail to far transcends that earthly Caanan. Against this construction it is objected—(1) This sea is before the throne; how can the world be so said? Properly, to show that all things in the world are not subject to fortune, but governed by Him that sits on the throne. (2) The world is rather thick and muddy; how can it be called crystal? Fitly, not in regard of its own nature, for so it is polluted; but in regard of God that beholds it, who sees all things done in it so clearly as in crystal. I. A SEA. 1. The sea is an unquiet element, which none but the Maker's hand can bridle (Matt. viii. 27). The world is in full measure as unruly. The Psalmist matcheth roaring waves and roaring men; the raging of the sea with the madness of the world. And yet God is able to still them both (Psa. lxxv. 7). The prophet calls the sea a raging creature, and therein yokes it with the wicked (Isa. lvii. 20). The world is full of molesting vexations no less than the sea. (1) Sometimes it swells with pride, as the sea with waves. (2) Vain-glory is the wind that raiseth up the billows of this sea. (3) The world, like the sea, is blue with envy, livid with malice. (4) Sometimes it boils with wrath: and herein the world and the sea are very similar. (5) The sea is not more deep than the world. A bottomless subtilty is in men's hearts, and an honest man wants a plummet to sound it. (6) There is foaming luxury in this sea; a corrupt and stinking froth, which the world casts up. The steam of lust fumes perpetually. (7) The world, as the sea, is a swallowing gulf. There are four great devourers in the world, luxury, pride, gluttony, covetousness. 2. The sea is bitter. The waters thereof are salt and brinish. All demonstrates the world to have an unsavoury relish. So it hath truly, whether we respect the works or the pleasures of it. But how bitter, saltish, and unsavoury soever the sea is, yet the fishes that swim in it exceedingly like it. The world is not so distasteful to the heavenly palate as it is sweet to the wicked. 3. The sea is no place to continue in. No man sails there to sail there; but as he propounds to his purpose a voyage, so to his hopes a return. The world in like sort is no place to dwell in

for ever. Self-flattering fools that so esteem it (Psa. xlix. 11). 4. The sea is full of dangers. II. A SEA OF GLASS. 1. There is a glassy colour congruent to the sea. All the beauty of glass consists in the colour; and what in the world, that is of the world, is commendable besides the colour? A cottage would serve to sleep in as well as a sumptuous palace, but for the colour. Russets be as warm as silks, but for the glistening colour. 2. Glass is a slippery metal. The wisest Solomon, the strongest Samson, have been fetched up by this wrestler, and measured their lengths on the ground. How dangerous, then, is it to run fast on this sea, where men are scarce able to stand. 3. This glass denotes brittleness. A fit attribute to express the nature of worldly things; for glass is not more fragile. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof," saith St. John. Man himself is but brittle stuff, and he is the noblest part of the world (Job xiv. 1). Now, since the world is a sea, and so brittle, a sea of glass, let us seek to pass over well, but especially to land well. A ship under sail is a good sight; but it is better to see her well moored in the haven. Be desirous of good life, not of long life; the shortest cut to our haven is the happiest voyage. Who would be long on the sea? III. Thus far we have surveyed this glassy sea, the world, in regard of itself. The other two attributes concern ALMIGHTY GOD'S HOLDING AND BEHOLDING. 1. That God may most clearly view all things being and done in this world; it is said to be in His sight as clear as crystal. As in crystal there is nothing so little but it may be seen; so there is nothing on earth, said or done, so slight or small, that it may escape His all-seeing providence (Heb. iv. 13). God beholds, as in a clear mirror of crystal, all our impurities, impieties, our contempt of sermons, neglect of sacraments, dishallowing His sabbaths. Well, as God sees all things so clearly, so I would to God we would behold somewhat. Let us open our eyes and view in this crystal glass our own works. 2. Lastly, this glassy sea is not only as crystal for the transparent brightness that the Almighty's eye may see all things done in it, but it lies for situation before His throne; generally for the whole, and particularly for every member, subject to His judgment and governance. His throne signifies that impartial government which He exerciseth over the world (Psa. ix. 7, 8). (T. Adams.) **Four beasts full of eyes before and behind.**—*The ideal of intelligent creaturship*:—I. IT STANDS IN IMMEDIATE CONTACT WITH THE PRESENCE AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD. 1. It is the ideal of intelligent creaturship to live in the immediate presence of God. 2. It is the ideal of intelligent creaturship to serve in connection with the celestial government of all things. II. IT HAS NUMEROUS INLETS OF KNOWLEDGE WHICH AID IN A VIGILANT CONDUCT OF LIFE. 1. They have a power to understand history: eyes behind. 2. They have a power to comprehend prophecy: eyes before. 3. They have power to interpret self: eyes within. III. IT IS GIFTED WITH A COMBINATION OF VARIED AND WELL-BALANCED ABILITIES. 1. Great courage. 2. Enduring industry. 3. True intelligence. 4. Sublime aspiration. 5. Swift service. IV. IT IS EVER ASCRIBING DEVOUT PRAISE TO THE GREAT GOD. Lessons: 1. There are in the unseen universe intelligent creatures vastly superior to man. 2. As these creatures find the highest joy in the service of God, so should man. 3. Man should seek to enter into the vigour of an ideal creaturship. (J. S. Exell, M.A.) **Full of eyes within.**—*Spiritual introspection*:—I. A FEW THOUGHTS RESPECTING THESE AWFUL INTELLIGENCES OF WHOM WE READ IN THE TEXT. Every manifestation of the glory of God has usually been accompanied with the presence of these living creatures. In the column of fire at the gate of Eden were seen the mystic forms and evolutions of these wondrous beings. In after times, God was addressed as dwelling between the cherubim. In the holiest of all, there was the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. The symbol of the Divine presence seems associated with them. It is to be remembered that the Oriental court was framed on the principle that it was the pattern of the Divine. The monarch was the visible representative of God. His laws, like those of God, were immutable. No one without permission could see his face and live; and the highest princes of the realm stood in his presence. In the court of our sovereign the most exalted personages—the highest in title, rank, and wealth—minister to royalty. Their very greatness is necessary to qualify them for service, and thus they manifest the glory of the monarch. Those created beings who stand before God in an official character are represented as possessing all possible perfections. They are the highest order of created intelligences; they are the ministers of the great King—and yet between them and God how great, how inconceivable the distance! The impropriety of terming these living creatures "beasts" has been admitted by every writer—the term is utterly at variance with their character and perfections. They

are evidently official personages. All their acts are official. That these living creatures possess the highest capacities may be presumed from their dignified station. Their penetrating and comprehensive knowledge is intimated by their being "full of eyes, before and behind." They see the past as well as the present; they can look all ways and see all things. They have, in its perfection, the faculty of introspection, for they have "eyes within." This singular statement is but the symbol of their knowledge of themselves, as well as of outward things. II. A FEW SUGGESTIONS RELATIVE TO THE FACULTY OF INTROSPECTION. Man is related to the outward and to the spiritual world—to the things that are seen and to the things that are unseen—to the things that are temporal and to the things that are eternal. He has an outward and an inward life—the sense of sight and the faculty of introspection. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made"; he has the faculty of introspection, but through disuse it becomes dimmed, or paralysed, and dead. Christ comes that men may see: "He opens blind eyes." The regenerated man is the spiritual man, with the full use of spiritual powers, with the faculty of spiritual discernment. But more particularly—1. Man does not recognise his own spiritual nature. He does not know how awful and mysterious that nature is. His outward life overshadows his inner life. His body is the prison-house of his soul. The spiritual man has "eyes within." He communes with his own heart; he listens to the utterances of his spirit; he is familiar with the sorrows and joys of his soul. We may well pray, each for himself, Open Thou my eyes that I may see myself. 2. Man does not study the phenomena of his own mind. He thinks, but he thinks about his calling, about his trade; his thoughts are like his tools, his implements. He does not employ the powers of his mind on spiritual realities, or make his thoughts the chariot in which he can ascend to God. If we had eyes within we should see that there is nothing more wonderful than thought. We should see "that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he"; that if he thinks worldly thoughts, he is worldly; that if he thinks sensual thoughts, he is sensual; that if he thinks spiritual thoughts, he is spiritual; that thoughts are of moment and of the utmost importance. 3. Men do not know their own hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" There is only one Being who knows it. If our eyes were opened, we should cry out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." 4. Men do not form a correct estimate of their own capabilities. "Man," says Pascal, "is the scorn and the glory of the universe." You have a nature that can only find its completeness in God, and therefore you can only find your satisfaction in Him. You have capabilities that you do not conceive of, for joy or for misery. You can become a partaker of a Divine nature, or you can sink into the most fearful degradation and infamy. (*H. J. Bevis.*) *The seeing eye*:—Full of eyes they are, these living creatures, not only before and behind, but within and without. Within every living creature perceives itself, scrutinises its own inner mysteries, and knows its own instincts and feelings and passions and ambition and hope and purpose. All these it has eyes to see in their manifold combinations even as it moves on and acts. And eyes without, not absorbed in introspection, but rather, and at the same moment at which it searches the deep things of the spirit, and by the same act it has eyes without, eyes that see so far away into the heart of things, eyes that gaze upon all the amazing scenery of the world about it, eyes that look upon the face of the eternal God. Full of eyes! What a surprising characteristic of nature for us! Our modern feeling about nature, derived from unphilosophic popularised science of the day, pronounced that nature is eyeless, that it works in the dark, that its laws are blind to its issues and action. Nature crushes and ruins the distinction between good and bad and right and wrong, and knows not what it does. Rivers run blindly down in their grooved channels; the seas beat blindly against blind rocks; the winds moan in blindness round the blind walls of the hills. The whole earth is blind. The heavens are vacant of any vision; they tell us we have put out their eyes. And this has happened, we know, because we have dropped God and His Christ out of their own creation. We have tried to look at it as if they were not there. We are compelled, in order to accomplish certain analytical issues essential to scientific investigation, to omit the spiritual factors of the universe from our immediate calculations. But then this abstraction is confessedly only for a purpose that is partial and incomplete in itself, and the danger lies in this, that when once this partial purpose of science is satisfied we forget to restore what our abstraction had eliminated. And then we look up and out and are appalled—for lo, God has vanished out of the natural scene! It is all empty of His presence, of His will!

It is purposeless, it is mechanical, it is blind—so we cry in our dismay! How could God be expected to appear in the shape of a material phenomenon, and yet only so could our scientific methods of research come upon Him. So it is that the world is blind, is godless to this pseudo-science. Look at nature with the eyes of a spirit, according to the rules and methods of spiritual vision; bring into play the organs that belong to a spiritual world, and lo! it is no longer sightless and meaningless and dark; it has become full of eyes within and without. In every portion of it there is a light, a purpose, a hope. The soul of man becomes conscious of a spirit that is abroad and about him on every side, and which fills his earthly house with the presence of Him he knows and who knows him. On all sides of him in this natural life here on earth he dimly perceives by the inspiration of a fellow feeling the living creatures full of eyes within and without, who unite with him in uttering the one phrase, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Full of eyes within and without. Our common humanity—that too should become full of eyes. Every faculty, every capacity in us which before had passed under Christ's sway while it was of the earth earthy was always blundering into the dark, should discover that the quickening power of the Spirit has brought out one great boon—the gift of eyes—the capacity to see. That is the triumph of grace—that it enables this natural gift of man, his reason, to see where before he could not see. Grace gives it eyes, and reason henceforward can join in the hymn of adoration. It looks within and it looks without, and everywhere it now recognises the triple law of the spiritual life, the triple evidence of the threefold God! And thus made full of eyes to see, it, too, sings its song, Holy, holy, holy! And not reason only, but conscience gains eyes; the natural conscience lifted and transfigured perceives what it had never seen hitherto. It sees, for instance, the higher possibility of purity to which it had been wholly dark; it sees that purity holds the secret of true growth, for man and for woman all alike and both equally, which was never suggested to it until Christ opened its eyes. It detects the powers inherent in humiliation, in self-sacrifice, and in brotherly service. Therefore, where before it expected only weakness, it now perceives strength; the glories that lay concealed in virtues that it deemed passive and petty and effeminate are now disclosed to it. The darkness should always be turning into light as the fulness of grace spreads throughout the dim surface of human life, and touches it all with glory. Full of eyes! A question appropriate to Trinity Sunday for each one of us is, Do we use our human capacities with better precision than we did? Do we use them over the larger surface of life? Do we see more than we used to of God's counsels for us here, of man's obligations, of our own possibilities and calls and duties? Grace should be for ever raising our ordinary capacities to a higher power, enriching their insight, fertilising their judgment. Is it so? Ask yourselves. Your imagination, for instance, is it more full of eyes than before? Does your imagination bring the sorrow of the world before you as if it were your own case, as a bitter sorrow, as a personal disgrace, for which you abhor yourself in dust and ashes? And your sympathies, are they more alert, quicker than once they were? Ah, the sins! They, too, stand out, now that you have eyes to see them, with a worse ugliness and a more rooted, stubborn repugnance. You had not thought yourself so bad, so base, so selfish, but now the light is thrown on you. You have eyes to see all the black wrong. (*Canon Scott Holland.*) They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy.—*Labour and rest*:—God has affixed certain peculiarities to our present state of being. It can be shown that there are portions even of the visible creation in which there can be no succession of day and night such as there is on earth—regions far removed in space from us, where clusters of suns must of necessity make perpetual sunshine. And we know from Scripture that the peculiar relation between rest and labour which is characteristic of earth, at all events as it is, is local, or temporary, or both; and that in another state of things the words of our text take the place of it, and "they rest not day and night." I. IN EDEN THERE WAS REST WITHOUT LABOUR. Eden in its innocence gave no trouble to its inhabitants. They trimmed its roses, and trod its velvet lawns, and ate its fruits, and drank its transparent rivers, and enjoyed the tranquillity of unbroken rest. And this is the reason why, though man now cannot be really happy without employment, he naturally turns in imagination to such a state as one of perfect enjoyment. It was his primary condition before sin entered into the world. II. WE TURN TO LABOUR AND REST—THE RELATION WHICH EXISTS ON EARTH AS IT IS. That in this state of things there should be labour is expressly declared after the fall. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." That there must

be rest is expressly taught: "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." And we know, in practice, that within certain limits there may be a change in the relation subsisting between the two, but that if these limits are exceeded either way, the result is ruin to man's moral and physical constitution. It degrades him to be without labour; it destroys him to be without rest. There is but one who has lived in this ruined world without sin. Christ, as man, is the model of what man ought to be in a world which is as it ought not to be. In Christ's example we see what ought to be man's state in the present world, as it respects labour and rest: that the two should interchange—that because it is paradise no longer there must be toil, and because it is still earth there must be rest—rest for bodily refreshment, rest for the friendly intercourse of one with another, rest for communion with Him whose presence alone can give the soul of man true rest. III. There is another solution of the problem of the relation between labour and rest—LABOUR WITHOUT REST. And this is only to be found in hell. Satan himself is always represented as a being of restless activity: "going about," "walking up and down." There is a faint reflection of hell in the bosom of each unconverted man; and of such we read (Isa. lvii. 20). And let me say that whatever makes earth approximate to a state of restlessness, so far makes it approach to a resemblance to the place of everlasting misery. IV. We come to the last and best relation between rest and labour, THAT WHICH EXISTS IN HEAVEN, where they "rest not day and night," because they rest in labour. In heaven employment is unceasing—for those who are there are freed from the weariness of the flesh. Free from all infirmity, they rest not day and night. And employment is unceasing in heaven—for the employments of heaven are restoring instead of exhausting. They have life in them. (*S. Garratt, B.A.*) *True worship a foretaste of heaven:*—Now, what are the characteristic features, so to call them, of the perfect worship of heaven, which are touched on in the text? 1. It will be a continuous service. There will be no break or intermission on the part of those who join in it. The *now* that is there is always. 2. It will be united worship—all join and all join alike. 3. The character of the worship will be one and the same. 4. The worship will be "before the throne," i.e., in the conscious immediate presence of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with all the surroundings of visible glory. 5. The worship will be all-absorbing in contemplation of the Divine glory and perfections. No thought of personal doings or deservings can find place there. There is only the acknowledgment that all are His gifts—all has come from Him—and there is the humble tendering back of everything. "The crowns are cast before the throne" in adoring thankfulness to Him who is the Giver of them all. Worship, as distinct from prayer and praise and thanksgiving, is the conscious lifting up of the soul to God in contemplation of Him, in His Being and acts, whether towards ourselves in particular, or towards our whole race, or in all His works, according to our knowledge of them. We cannot really worship without knowledge—we cannot worship a blank; we must have knowledge of Him to whom we pay homage; and that knowledge must be received into ourselves from without. Thus worship is both a taking in and a giving out: taking in, i.e., receiving, and following out, and expanding, and setting forth before ourselves, who that great Being is with whom we have to do, whose works encompass us, and to whom we desire to draw near, to know better and to hold communion with; and then giving back, as it were, this knowledge at which we have arrived, in acts of adoration and praise, expressed in different ways according to the subject matter as regards Almighty God, in which we may be engaged. The two must go hand in hand: you cannot rightly worship except you have acquaintance with Him whom you worship, and you cannot have this acquaintance without worship. You cannot come at a right knowledge of Almighty God, much less of Almighty God as revealed under the Christian dispensation, except the knowledge acquired and the spirit in which that knowledge is dwelt on and followed up, be with a mind of adoration and worship. And the two (the knowledge and the worship) grow and advance together. Increased knowledge of God carries us on in worship, and fuller worship leads up to fuller knowledge. What is set before us in the text is the type of the perfect worship of heaven, and it is toward this that our life on earth should lead. For man's eternal joy will be in praising God. The power of fully appreciating the love of God towards us will prompt the unceasing praise, and in that unceasing praise will be the joy of heaven. The Divine love, which receives the praises of that innumerable blessed company, will ever fresh inspire their song, will pour into it new depth and

richness, and will receive it into the fulness of the Divine life. There is no intermission, there is no end; for God's glory cannot be known in its eternity except by the gift of an eternal power of contemplation and of union with Him. People talk a great deal about places of worship and forms of worship. But do they consider what worship means? They think perhaps of edification by sermons, or of instruction out of God's Holy Scriptures, or of joining in prayers and hymns, or of the good they may feel, or of the things they need to ask, but these are not worship. In all these we look for something for ourselves, something to get. But worship does not mean getting anything, but it means giving something. And what? Money, costly offerings, such things as come by birth, high station, or intellect? Not so; not so, in the truest sense of giving. For these things are not our own. It is of them that the man after God's own heart said, "Of Thine own have we given Thee." Wherein, then, consists that offering which we may more truly call our own than all such things without, though in a sense, and for a time at least, they do belong to us? Something there is, more nearly and more truly our own, which we are to give. That more costly offering, that in which God has delight, is ourselves. We make an offering of our mind, when we withdraw our thoughts from the business of the world, from those things which engross our thoughts and make any lengthened devotion wearisome and distasteful; when we calmly and resolutely set ourselves to mediate on God and things of God; when we try to shut out the distractions of things, and to fix our thoughts upon God, and upon God only, for the time. Again, we make an offering of our heart, which is the seat of the affections, in earnestness of devotion, calling up before us His goodness, His love, His bounties towards us, as well in respect of His gifts in this life as still more for all His gracious and abundant promises for the life to come. Again, as God made the mind, He requires an offering of that; and as He made the heart, He demands an offering of that also; so, too, as He made the body, He requires that the body shall bear part in worshipping Him. This we do by outward acts of worship, bowing, kneeling, singing, and joining in the services of His house. Thus the whole man, body and soul, may take part in worship; after this manner here below preparing for the perfect worship of heaven. And He who invites us thus to worship here will be with us, and make that worship approach little by little towards the perfect worship of heaven. (*R. F. Wilson.*) *Celestial worship:*

—I. THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN WILL ENGAGE THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL CELESTIAL CREATURESHIP. 1. Universal. 2. Ceaseless. 3. Perfect. II. THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN WILL BE INSPIRED BY CLEAR VIEWS OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. 1. Holy. 2. Omnipotent. 3. Eternal. III. THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN IS RENDERED WITH THE GREATEST HUMILITY OF SOUL. 1. This humility is inspired by a true sense of the Divine majesty. 2. This humility is awakened by a due estimate of the unworthiness of self. 3. This humility is manifested by the external attitudes of worship. The crown of an adoring soul gains its worth and brightness by being cast before the throne of God. IV. THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN IS CELEBRATIVE OF THE CREATIVE PLEASURE OF GOD. 1. Celestial worship ascribes the plan of creation to the creative power of God. 2. Celestial worship recognises the creative power of God as calling for the highest worship of intelligent creatures. They ascribe to God—1. Glory. 2. Honour. 3. Power. Lessons: 1. It is the privilege and duty of all intelligent creatures to worship God. 2. In praise we should seek to have clear views of the Divine character. 3. We should endeavour to approach God with a becoming sense of unworthiness. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Earnest devotion:*—In the apostle's vision of heaven, he is struck with the glowing devotion of the spirits before the throne. It is pure, fervent, and exalted; it is subject to no changes of rising and falling emotions; it is always as great as the perfections of the Infinite require, and as the nature of the hearts from which it proceeds permits it to be. Do you ask, "How can it be sustained at such a height, when all human devotion is so easily brought down—how can their minds be kept fixed on the object of their adoration when human thoughts so readily wander away?" The explanation is found in the words, "They rest not day and night"; their hearts are always engaged in the service; the night suspends it not, for there is no night there. It is because they are thus devoted—in a word, it is because they rest not—that their devotion maintains itself so fervent, and towers so high. This, then, illustrates the great truth which ought to be impressed on every heart; religious improvement, the chief object of existence, requires the steady devotion of all our powers to secure it. In proportion as man rests from that labour does he surrender the hope and power of ever securing that prize. Consider the effect of inaction upon the physical nature. The frame which is regularly exercised, if not

urged beyond its strength, grows in firmness and energy, and expands in full and fair proportion. But let the frame be given over to rest, let the man have no steady employment that requires interest and exertion, and it is not long before disease begins to spread through the system. Consider the effect of inaction upon the mind of man. There is a strong analogy between the wants of the body and the mind; exertion is indispensable to the health of each; and though one who lives without exercising either may not yet perceive the injury he is doing to himself, it is not less certain that the day of recompense and sorrow must come. Disease is as sure to follow the inactive mind as the inactive body. Its effects are not open to the eye, or rather they are not noticed by careless observers, though they may be seen in the incapacity for serious reflection, in the depraved intellectual taste which can relish only miscellaneous novelty or intoxicating fiction. When the body dies, its pains and sorrows are over; not so, not so with the mind, which dieth not; when coldness wraps the suffering clay, the mind still lives and must live for ever. Consider the effect of inaction on the spiritual nature of man. It is common to meet with those who neither look forward to eternity nor up to God; and the consequence is, not only that their devotion, if they ever had any, dies, but also that they lose the power of devotion. They lose all power of spiritual discernment, so that the great realities of another world have no presence nor life to the soul. This is the darkest and most fearful thought that can be presented to the human mind—the death and ruin of the soul. There is a time when “ye cannot do the things that ye would.” The same is true of love to men, that other great duty which God so intimately associated with devotion. This feeling can be strengthened into a principle by the common sympathy of life—that sympathy which is never so strong and sure as when sanctified by religious feeling. But if our benevolent impulses are not followed, we lose not only the opportunity of the moment, but we lose the power of exertion. They are like the wayfarer in the polar regions; after suffering awhile with the cold, he feels a sleep stealing over him; it comes without pain, it gives no warning of danger; unable to resist the persuasive influence, he sinks into slumber, from which he never wakes in this world again. It is in the same way that hearts are frozen; they feel no danger, they suspect not that the sleep which is stealing over them is the sleep of death. Having thus endeavoured to show what law we are under, let us take a more practical view of the subject. Love to God and love to man are the great elements of that character which we are sent into this world to form, and it is practising on these principles which gives them power and increases their power within us. It is because the seraphs rest not day and night that their hearts become living flames in the service of their God. We are to remember, then, that God has so arranged the present life that all things favour the growth of love to man in those who really determine to possess it, while all things seem to hinder it in those who hold it in slight regard. Whenever an opportunity of benevolence is offered—whenever God’s providence makes an appeal, as it often does, to our kind feeling—we should feel that to resist it or reject it is wrong. It is so much done to injure and destroy the principles and affections which form the only treasures of heaven; they are all the wealth we can carry from this world into another, and without them we shall be poor indeed. So, if we have the least desire to possess the spirit of devotion, we shall take advantage of every time and every service that can awaken the spirit of devotion. (*W. B. O. Peabody, D.D.*) *The celebration of the Trinity*:—In the understanding of this place, what, or who these four creatures are, there is difficulty. And so we shall well do if we interpret these four creatures to be first and principally the four evangelists, and then enlarge it to all the ministers of the gospel. So, then, the action being an open and a continual profession of the whole Christian religion, in the celebration of the Trinity, which is the distinctive character of the Christian, the persons that do this are all they that constitute the hierarchy and order of the Church. And before we come to their qualification in the text, first, as they are said to have six wings, and then as they are said to be full of eyes, we look upon them as they are formed and designed to us in the verse immediately before the text, where the first of these four creatures hath the face of a lion, the second of a calf, or an ox, the third of a man, the fourth of an eagle. Now, says St. Ambrose, these four creatures are the preachers of the gospel; that we had established afore, but then we add with St. Ambrose, all these four creatures make up but one creature; all their qualities concur to the qualification of a minister; every minister of God is to have all that all four had—the courage of a lion, the laboriousness of an ox, the perspicuity

and clear sight of the eagle, and the humanity, the discourse, the reason, the affability, the appliableness of a man. All must have all, or else all is disordered—zeal, labour, knowledge, gentleness. Now besides these general qualifications, laid down as the foundation of the text, in the verse before it, in the text itself these four creatures have also wings added unto them; wings, first for their own behoof and benefit, and then, wings for the benefit and behoof of others. They have wings to raise themselves from the earth, that they do not entangle themselves in the business of this world; but still to keep themselves upon the wing in a heavenly conversation, ever remembering that they have another element than sea or land, as men whom Christ Jesus hath set apart, and in some measure made mediators between Him and other men as His instruments of their salvation. And then as for themselves, so have they wings for others too, that they may be always ready to succour all in all their spiritual necessities. And then, their wings are numbered in our text: they have six wings. For by the consent of most expositors, those whom St. John presents in the figure of these four creatures here, and those whom the prophet Isaiah calls seraphim, are the same persons. The Holy Ghost sometimes presents the ministers of the gospel as seraphim in glory, that they might be known to be the ministers and dispensers of the mysteries and secrets of God, and to come from His council, His cabinet. And then on the other side, that you might know that the dispensation of these mysteries of your salvation is by the hand and means of men, taken from amongst yourselves, and that therefore you are not to look for revelations, nor ecstasies, nor visions, nor transportations, but to rest in God's ordinary means, He brings those persons down again from that glorious representation as the seraphim to creatures of an inferior, of an earthly nature. These winged persons, then have eyes as well as wings; they fly, but they know whither they fly. God gives them wings, that is, means to do their office; but eyes too, that is, discretion and religious wisdom how to do it. And this is that which they seem to need most, for their wings are limited, but their eyes are not; six wings, but full of eyes, says our text. But then, especially, says our text, they were full of eyes within. All my wings shall do me no good, all mine eyes before and behind shall do me no good, if I have no prospect inward, no eyes within, no care of my particular and personal safety. If the Lord open thy lips, let it be to show forth His praise. That they speak, declare the glory of God. For this is that ingenuity, that alacrity, which constitutes our first branch. And then the second is the assiduity, the constancy, the incessantness, "They rest not day nor night." But have the saints of God no vacation? Do they never cease? Nay, as the word imports, they have no rest. God Himself rested not till the seventh day; be thou content to stay for thy sabbath till thou mayst have an eternal one. If we understand this of rest merely, of bodily rest, the saints of God are least likely to have it in this life; for this life is a business, a warfare, a voyage, and a tempestuous voyage. If we understand this rest to be cessation, intermission, the saints of heaven have none of that in this service. It is a labour that never wearies, to serve God there. To conclude all, this eternity of our God is expressed here in a phrase which designs and presents the last judgment, that is, "Which was, and is, and is to come." And, therefore, let us reverently embrace such provisions, and such assistances as the Church of God hath ordained, for retaining and celebrating the Trinity, in this particular contemplation, as they are to come to judgment. And let us at least provide so far, to stand upright in that judgment, as not to deny, nor to dispute the power, or the persons of those judges. (*John Donne, D.D.*)

VERS. 9-11. The four and twenty elders fall down . . . and cast their crowns before the throne.—Royal homage :—I. THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN ARE ALL CROWNED. How is this? 1. They are all kings, *Dei gratia*. There is not a king in heaven that has his crown on any other terms than this, "by the sovereign grace of God." 2. But, though it may seem astonishing, they are all kings by hereditary descent. They have been born again, and it is in their new nature that they are before the throne of God. 3. They are also kings by marriage alliance. There is many a crowned head that would not have been so by descent, but has come to be so by being given in wedlock to a royal consort. 4. They are kings by right of conquest and of victory. A crown should signify, and did signify in the olden times, battling and contending. They are kings, then, because they have fought with sin and with temptation. Yea, the brightest of them have had to bear the brunt of fiercest persecutions. 5. Then the crowned heads in heaven have their crowns, and their

crowns befit them well, because of the nobility of their character. They are sanctified, delivered from every taint of corruption, and now they are like their Lord Himself in holiness of character. Well should they be crowned whose character has thus been made glorious by the work of the Spirit of God within them! 6. And, once more, they have another right to their crowns, because those crowns represent real possessions. All things are theirs—the gift of God—and God is theirs and Christ is theirs. They are clothed with honour and majesty—not outwardly only but inwardly—and they have all the concomitants that should go with royal dignity. II. THEY ALL CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE.

1. Solemn reverence. They see more of God than we do, therefore are they more filled with awe and thrilled with admiration. Our reverence will always make us feel in the lowliest state of self-abasement at the foot of the throne! 2. Moreover, they are no doubt actuated by sincere humility. Reverence to God always brings a humble opinion of one's own self. 3. Doubtless, also, they do this for another reason, namely, because of their profound gratitude. They bless God that they are where they are, and what they are. 4. Above all, they are actuated by intense affection. They love their Lord, and loving their Lord they do anything to adore Him. They are glad to fling their richest goods, their choicest trophy, their most cherished treasure, at His feet: they love Him so. III. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. By this text we can know whether we are on the way to heaven or not; because no man goes to heaven to learn for the first time heavenly things. 2. The next lesson is a lesson of unanimity. Our text says that all cast their crowns before the throne. There are no divided opinions in heaven, no sects and parties, no schisms there. 3. Once again, these redeemed ones in heaven teach us the true way of happiness. They set before us what perfect bliss is. There is no happiness beneath the clouds like the happiness of unselfishness. Strip yourself, and you clothe yourself. Throw money away, and you grow rich—I mean in a spiritual sense. Happiness, again, consists in adoration, for these blessed spirits find it to be their happiness to adore God. The happiest days you ever spent are those in which you worshipped God most. But then they were not merely happy because they were self-denying and adoring, but because they were practical. They took off their crowns and laid them before the throne. And our joy on earth must lie in practically carrying out our principles. Cast your ability to do and to suffer, as well as the crown of your labour and patience, at the foot of your God; serve Him with all your heart and wisdom and strength, and thus, your self-denial and adoration being mixed therewith, you shall realise on earth as much as possible a foretaste of what the joy of heaven may be. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The feelings of saints in heaven* :—I. THE

IMPORT OF THE ACTION. It is necessary to recollect that all the rewards which await the righteous in heaven are often summed up in the comprehensive expression of a kingdom. Casting these crowns at the foot of the throne was, therefore, the same as casting their kingdom, with all its dignity, glory, and honour, at the feet of God and the Lamb. 1. It was an acknowledgment of what God is, and of what He deserves from His creatures. 2. It implied a more particular acknowledgment that to Him all the glory of their salvation belonged. II. THE FEELINGS WHICH PROMPTED IT, AND OF WHICH IT WAS AN EXPRESSION. 1. It was prompted by, it was an expression of, perfect humility. 2. It expressed, and was prompted by perfect love to God and the Redeemer. 3. It was prompted by, and expressed perfect gratitude. 4. It expresses the most profound reverence. (E. Payson, D.D.)

The crown :—If we except the ever-blessed Cross, there is no such symbol as the crown. It speaks of honour and exaltation, and of the care which attends them. The crown denotes power, dominion, victory, and possession: it indicates, not less evidently, anxiety, responsibility, uneasiness, and toils of office. Beyond all these, it gives the idea of completeness; of such completeness as belongs to any creature, any estate, or any condition. That which perfects and finishes a joy or a sorrow is called its crown; the crown of happiness, the crown of misery, are set upon them by some event after which they cannot be enhanced. The Lord Protector Cromwell was wont to speak of a certain decisive battle as his "crowning mercy"; and the first of living poets says that "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things." So full of meaning is the word that there seems no end to what it can express. Those four-and-twenty are examples of such as enter into the rest of God; who have obtained the crown of righteousness, because they were counted worthy of it, and give proof of their merit in the perfection of their self-renunciation. What may be done by way of experiment to become true, sincere, and simple-hearted followers of the servants of God? Material for practice abounds. God hath made

us kings and priests unto Himself: and even before this, in his natural estate, man is the head and lord of all the works of our Father's hand. We wear as men the crown of dominion over inferior orders of animals; as redeemed men, we wear the crown of a royal estate of sons of God by adoption and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Here are the crown of nature and the crown of grace both associated with our life in this world. These, moreover, denote privilege, power, and duty; and first a man should ask himself whether he be doing his duty in that state unto which it has pleased Almighty God to call him: for if not, the sign of his native dignity and superadded honour, even already, ere life be spent, is tarnishing around his temples, and looking as though presently it might crack asunder and fall into the dust. But this is merely the beginning; these things are common to us all. Over and above what pertains to our state as men, and what is generally necessary to our salvation, comes that which stamps the individual as distinct from his fellows. There be as many crowns as heads to wear them. God, who sees all, sees something in each life which makes that life's crown. It may be a crown of happiness, or a hard ring of sorrow; a crown of mercy and blessing in basket and store, in goods and lands, in home and household, or a crown of poverty, affliction, and grief. Whatsoever it be, each life has its crown, to distinguish it from all the rest. These we must wear, each in the order of his lot: and, knowing that ye all have them, let me ask you whether you are offering, each his own crown, of joy, or pain, or care, as the case may be, to God? Some of you have the lot of toil: your crown is an iron band clasped around the head by the fingers of necessity: are you, in spirit, casting that before the throne, and offering your work and daily tasks to God? Some of you have been born to wealth, or have acquired it: your crowns are precious, and worth much money; are you, in spirit, offering them to God, and saying as you do mercy and give alms, Thine, O Lord, are these, and of Thine own do we offer to Thee? Some of you are very happy, in domestic relations, in social position, as life runs on smoothly and successfully; your crowns are crowns of mercies; are you daily offering them at the foot of the throne, acknowledging their Author and pouring out the tribute of your thanks? (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*)

Rightful homage:—England was perhaps never more humiliated than when John took off his crown and placed it in the hands of Pandulph, the Pope's legate, and then received it from him as from the Pope. It was mean in John so to abase himself, especially after he had boasted that "no Italian priest shall tithe or toll in our dominion." It would have been less disgraceful in him to have hurled his crown among the reeds beside the Thames, than to have put it in the hands of Pandulph. But the royal people in heaven are right in doing homage for their crowns before the throne of God. By that act they confess their indebtedness to God for their crowns. (*J. Marrat.*)

Man in heaven:—I. MAN IN HEAVEN HAS REACHED THE HIGHEST DIGNITY. He has "crowns." 1. Have faith in the improbability of our nature. 2. Let us be consoled under the departure by death of the good. 3. Let us not judge of providence without taking into account the future as well as the present. II. MAN IN HEAVEN ASCRIBES THE DIGNITY HE HAS REACHED TO JESUS CHRIST. "They cast their crowns," &c. 1. A conviction that they owed all their honours to Christ. 2. A readiness to acknowledge their obligation. The greater our nature the more ready to acknowledge our obligation. 3. The surpassing glories of Christ. He is in the midst of the throne, and all ascribe their all to Him. Napoleon the First, after he had conquered empires, and planted his foot upon the neck of kingdoms, determined to be crowned Emperor. To give pageantry and lustre to the occasion, he compelled the Pope of Rome to be present. In the act of coronation, the emperor refused to receive the crown from the Pope; his proud spirit told him he had won it himself: he placed it upon his own brow, thus declaring to the spectators and the civilised world the fact that he was indebted to himself only for imperial power. There is nothing of this spirit in heaven; they all cast their crowns at the feet of Christ, and say, "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." (*Homilist.*)

Glory to the glorious One:—Jesus, Messiah, the Lamb that was slain, the King on the throne, Creator of the universe, Head of all things, is He who is worthy to receive the glory! And why? I. BECAUSE OF HIS PERSON. As having in Himself all the perfections of the Creator and of the creature; as very God and very man; the Word made flesh—He is "worthy to receive glory." Godhead and manhood, united in one wondrous person, make Him infinitely glorious. II. BECAUSE OF HIS WORK. The excellency of His propitiation is infinite. It is—1. Excellent in itself. 2. In its revelation of Divine wisdom. 3. In its manifestation of Divine love. 4. In its reconciliation of grace with righteous-

ness. 5. In its everlasting results. Because of such a work it is said, "Thou art worthy to receive glory." III. BECAUSE OF HIS LIFE ON EARTH. His whole earthly life was marvellous. There has been nothing like it, neither shall be. It was absolute perfection in every part: the perfection of a human life. IV. BECAUSE OF THE REDEMPTION OF HIS CHURCH. V. BECAUSE OF WHAT HE IS NOW IN HEAVEN. He has triumphed over His enemies; He has abolished death; He has emptied the grave; He has risen; He has ascended on high; He ever lives to intercede; He is the head of principalities and powers; He sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. VI. BECAUSE OF WHAT HE IS TO BE AND TO DO WHEN HE COMES AGAIN. 1. Let us appreciate His excellency. 2. Let us thoroughly trust and love Him. 3. Let us make use of His fulness. 4. Let us bow before Him. 5. Let us sing the song of praise. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *God glorified in heaven for His works of creation and providence:—*I. THE HEAVENLY CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD CREATED ALL THINGS. II. THAT ALL THINGS ARE AND WERE CREATED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE OR WILL. III. THAT ALL INTELLIGENT BEINGS ARE BOUND TO GLORIFY GOD FOR HIS WORKS OF CREATION AND PROVIDENCE. 1. These works should lead us to the knowledge and contemplation of their great and glorious Author. 2. We should glorify God in His works, by improving them to awaken in our souls pious affections to Him. 3. The works of God should invite us to Him in the humble exercises of devotion. 4. We are to glorify God for our own existence. 5. If creation deserves our praise, redemption deserves it still more, for this is our hope. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *Give God the glory:—*After the battle of Agincourt it is said of Henry V. that, desiring to acknowledge the Divine interposition, he ordered the chaplain to read a Psalm of David, and, when he came to these words, "Not unto us—not unto us, O Lord! but unto Thy name give glory and praise," the king dismounted, his officers dismounted—the cavalry all dismounted, great hosts of officers and men fell on their faces in reverence to their Great Deliverer. When we contemplate what great victories we have attained over sin, through Christ, how fitting to fall before God in thanksgiving and praise, crying, "Not unto us, but unto Thy name be the praise." (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*) *For Thy pleasure they are and were created.—**Creation the consequence of love:—*I. REMEMBER WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE NOTION OF "CREATION." It is not the bringing order out of disorder, beauty out of shapelessness and confusion. To create is to make out of nothing. But the truth that God created out of nothing, whilst it exalts immeasurably our conception of His Majesty, makes the question yet more urgent: "Why did He create?" We reply, that it seems to follow from the very nature of God, that He should create. God we believe to be all Good, the Fountain of Love, yea, Love itself. Must not a Being thus gracious, and thus in Himself an inexhaustible source of happiness, desire to communicate of His fulness unto others? Must not He, who is both wise and beneficent, desire to dispense wisdom? Must not He who has all power, if He be liberal, seek to give power? Throned in the light inaccessible, alone, and all-sufficient, He dwells in the plenitude of His own glory, lacking nothing, dependent upon none—a universe to Himself, to Himself all in all. Myriads of angels growing up around Him would add nought to His happiness. And not therefore for any selfish ends (as we term them) did God become a Creator. And yet was it for Himself? Yea, for Himself, we read throughout Scripture, God made the worlds. "Of Him are all things, and for Him are all things," writes the apostle. Even so. God's nature urged Him, nay, if we may dare so speak, compelled Him to create. Abounding in love, His love would not let Him dwell alone. The air and the water, the very dust of the ground teem, you know, with living things. Life meets us everywhere. We can detect no end answered by millions of creatures which swarm around us. It may be they do answer no end. But the love of God constrains Him to create, ay, if it be but to give to the tiny animalculæ in the drop of water a moment's taste of the pleasure of existence. And thus we seem to apprehend, in a measure at any rate, why God is to be rejoiced in as a Creator; ay, why the heavenly inhabitants should praise Him as having created all things for His pleasure. Creation is the most overwhelming demonstration that "God is Love"; creation is the "Ocean of Divine love," overflowing its banks, and pouring itself forth beyond all bounds. II. HAS THE ACT OF CREATION BEEN, ON THE WHOLE, PRODUCTIVE OF MORE HAPPINESS OR MISERY? What if, where God's love is manifested, God's justice must also be revealed; is this a reason why His love should be restrained? Nay; we still find in that love the cause of the authorship of our being; we recognise in that love the source of creation, though love could not have free course without giving scope for vengeance also; and we marvel not

that the eternal dwellers should unweariedly say, "Worthy art Thou to receive glory," &c. (*Bp. Woodford.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1-4. A book . . . sealed with seven seals.—The sealed book:—I. THE SEALED BOOK. 1. The Divine throne. 2. The Possessor of the throne. There is no name given, but there is eternal glory in this nameless majesty. 3. The right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. (1) The right hand is the symbol of wisdom. God's hand and His council are synonymous expressions (*Isa. xiv. 27; Acts iv. 28*). (2) The right hand is the symbol of power. All that infinite wisdom hath contrived, omnipotent power will certainly perform. (3) The right hand is also the symbol of Divine operation. In all the means and instruments employed He is still supreme. 4. The wonderful book. 5. The writing of the book. (1) The writing implies the immutability of His counsels and all His precious promises. (2) The writing implies the manifestation of His counsels—the design of God, that His will should be revealed, or made known to the world. (3) The writing implies their value and importance. They are worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance as a ground of hope and consolation to the Church. 6. The form of the writing—"It was written within and on the backside." The allusion implies the number and variety of the counsels, works, and dealings of God. It also implies the fulness of the writing. 7. The sealing of the book. (1) The sealing is expressive of Divine authority. This book proceeds from the throne, from God's right hand; it comes in His name, it is clothed with His prerogative, invested with His glory, and enforced by His omnipotence. (2) The sealing of the book is expressive of darkness. While a writing is sealed, the meaning is unknown. (3) The sealing of the book implies distance—the distance of time between the giving and fulfilling of Divine prediction. (4) The sealing of the book implies Divine certainty. What is written in the king's name, and sealed with his ring, may no man reverse. 8. The number of the seals—"It was sealed with seven seals." This implies the holiness, depth, fulness, and perfection of the counsels and covenant promises contained in the book of God's right hand. **II. THE HEAVENLY PROCLAMATION.** 1. The agent employed. He is called "an angel." 2. His glorious power and excellence. This was "a strong angel." 3. The wonderful proclamation—"The angel proclaimed with a loud voice." 4. The great subject of the proclamation—"Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" **III. THE UNAVAILING APPEAL.** 1. The field of inquiry is vast and boundless. 2. The universal appeal. 3. The subject of inquiry is expressed again, and more fully and gloriously declared to the world. The work to be performed is great and marvellous, and variously expressed in the Book of Revelation. The qualifications for the work are also great and marvellous. **IV. THE SORROW OF THE APOSTLE—"And I wept."** 1. If the book cannot be opened, how could the apostle refrain his voice from weeping and his eyes from tears? The darkness that rested on the Church's future history filled his heart with sorrow and deep foreboding fear. 2. The greatness of his sorrow—"And I wept much." There is a sacredness in sorrow, that fills the heart with awe. Yea, there is a majesty in overwhelming woe that commands the sympathy and homage of the heart. 3. The apostle repeats the reason of his sorrow; for the mind of the afflicted loves to linger on the cause of the affliction and the greatness of his grief: and he wonders that any one should feel such indifference to his melancholy tale, and take so little interest in what is so sadly interesting to him. (*Jas. Young.*) *The government of God:—* I. IT IS CONDUCTED ACCORDING TO A VAST PRECONCERTED PLAN. The Almighty never acts from impulse or caprice, but ever from plan or law; and this plan is truly vast. "It is written within and on the backside." All that shall happen through the vast futurities of individuals, families, nations, worlds, is mapped out on the pages of this wonderful book. Predestination is no special doctrine of the Bible; it is written on every part of nature; it includes as truly the motions of an atom as the revolutions of a world—the growth of a plant as the conversion of a soul. True philosophy, as well as Christianity, resolves everything but sin into the

predestination of Infinite Love. II. THIS VAST PRECONCERTED PLAN IS SEALED IN MYSTERY. 1. It transcends all finite intelligence. 2. It is frequently the source of great mental distress. 3. It is an inestimable means of spiritual discipline: it sobers, humbles, stimulates. III. THAT THE MYSTERY OF THIS PLAN IS TO BE EXPOUNDED BY CHRIST. He discloses the eternal purposes in various ways. (1) In His creative acts. Stars, suns, and systems are but the palpable forms or diagrams of Infinite ideas. (2) In His redemptive operations. (3) In His judicial conduct. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." In the last day what new disclosures will be made! (*Homilist.*)

The sealed book. :—I. THE APOSTOLIC VISION. II. THE APOSTOLIC PROCLAMATION. III. THE WEeping APOSTLE. This gives humanness and pathos to the scene. We too, like John, have shed tears as we wrestled to solve some dark, difficult problem in the government of our righteous but most merciful God. IV. THE CONSOLING ELDER. V. THE VICTORIOUS LION. (*Jas. Nelson.*)

The sealed book of the future. :—I. HOW BENEFICENT IS THE FACT OF OUR GENERAL IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE! It is this ignorance of the future which alone makes it possible for life to be a school of goodness, a training-ground for faith, hope, and a host of other qualities which are among the noblest that adorn the human soul. Could we see in the aggregate the sorrows which await us, the mere sight would crush us. Did we foresee the happiness which the "Hand that was pierced" is keeping for us, the present, with its limitations, and pains, and duties, would become intolerable to us. If we could foresee the certain victory or certain defeat of each battle we fight for justice, truth, and right, where would be our courage, our faith, our patience? But God has purposely hidden in His own wise and loving counsel such things as whether our lives are to be long or short; whom we shall marry, or whether we shall be married at all; whether we shall succeed or fail in examinations, or in business; whether we shall have health or sickness. And He has hidden these things in order that we may feel our dependence upon Him, and confide ourselves to His keeping; that we may give ourselves to the doing of His will, and leave to Him to choose the inheritance of friends and circumstances which the future may have in store for us. II. WHILE IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE IS GENERALLY BENEFICENT, OCCASIONS MAY ARISE WHEN A KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE BEYOND WHAT CAN BE GAINED BY EXPERIENCE AND FORESIGHT IS OF THE HIGHEST ADVANTAGE. This supposition is bound up in our belief in a supernatural revelation, such as the Bible professes to give. Such a revelation must deal, among other things, with the facts of the unseen world of which experience can give us no authentic information, and also with events of the future of this world's history beyond the power of the wisest merely human foresight to predict. A revelation of this kind would plainly not be given unless it were needed, but serious doubt as to the need seems hardly possible. While ignorance of the future on our part is needful, it is no less needful to our welfare that Some One should know our future; and, also, not less needful to our comfort that we should be assured of this knowledge on His part. The growing child is still dependent on the knowledge of its future needs which leads parents to train and educate it with a view to its well-being and happiness. But the best knowledge and truest foresight of parents will not enable them to predict with certainty the future events of the child's life. This third and highest kind of evidence brings into full view the question that is of infinite and eternal importance for every individual: How do I stand related at this moment to this living and reigning Saviour? Only one relationship can be right and safe, that of humble submission, of trustful loyalty, of reverent affection. III. WHAT EFFECT OUGHT OUR KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S COMPLETE MASTERY OVER THE FUTURE TO HAVE UPON OUR FEELING AND ACTION? Should not this glorious truth infuse into our feeling a deep peace? Should it not inspire us with quiet confidence and a lion-like courage—a mighty hope and an invincible patience? (*Arthur James, B.A.*)

The book, the Lamb, and the song. :—I. "A BOOK, WRITTEN WITHIN AND ON THE BACK WITH SEVEN SEALS." 1. It is the book of redemption. Its central thought is the Cross, which is the wisdom of God and the power of God. 2. This book is complete; it is "written within and on the back," both sides of the parchment covered. God's plan of redemption is round and full. Its last word is "Finis," and there is room for no other. 3. The book was "close sealed with seven seals." In the ages before Christ the great problem was how God could be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Three sentiments were struggling in all human breasts: the conviction of sin, the intuitive apprehension of death, and the trembling hope that God, in some wise, would deliver. The

solution of the difficulty was hid within this volume of the Divine decrees—hid by the Father, to be revealed in fulness of time unto us. II. A LAMB AS IT HAD BEEN SLAIN. And this Lamb took the book out of the right hand of God and opened it. The opening of this book of the Divine decrees concerning the redemption of man is like daybreak after an Egyptian night. As to this Lamb observe—1. He bore in His person the tokens of death. Our Lord Jesus wears in glory the honourable scars of His service on earth. Why did the Lord Jesus die? That so, in our behalf, He might triumph over death. That so He might prevail to open the book of life and immortality. 2. The place where the Lamb stood is significant: it was “in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders.” Where else should He stand who ever liveth to make intercession for us, the Mediator of the new covenant, the only One between God and men. John Bunyan was at one time sorely troubled to know how the Lord Jesus could be both man and God. “At last that in Rev. v. 6 came into my mind: ‘And, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the elders stood a Lamb.’—‘In the midst of the throne,’ thought I—there is the Godhead; ‘in the midst of the elders’—there is the manhood; but, oh, methought this did glisten! It was a goodly touch, and gave me sweet satisfaction.” 3. He had seven horns. The horn is the emblem of power. The name of Jesus is The Mighty to Save. 4. He had seven eyes, which are the fulness of the Divine Spirit sent forth into all the earth. We are now living under the dispensation of this Spirit, who goeth to and fro everywhere like multitudinous eyes to see into all hearts and perceive all secret imaginations, ever watchful for truth and righteousness, to the end that all souls and all nations presently may be brought under the peaceful sway of the Lamb. The horns of Divine power and the eyes of Divine wisdom are grandly and perpetually co-working towards this consummation so devoutly to be wished. III. OH, THEN WHAT A SONG, when heaven and earth shall join in ascribing praises to Him that was dead, but is alive again, and liveth for evermore, and hath the keys of death and hell! 1. It will be a new song. The fresh mercies of God call, even here, for perpetual renewals of thanksgiving. Stale praises are in no wise better than stale manna. But how will it be in the kingdom? The songs yonder must keep pace with the perpetually new unveilings of Divine love. 2. And it will be a universal song, joined in by “the redeemed tenantry of heaven and earth, the angels of the sky, and grateful inmates of the ocean and the air.” (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *The writing on the book of life*:—The book of futurity is what was sealed with seven seals. It is a dark and mysterious one for us also. The future is closed to us, and must remain so. How foolish the wish to raise this thick veil. Every joy, being foreseen, would lose its attraction; every pain and loss would become an insufferable torture. Through God’s grace the future is hid from us; and they are foolish who pretend to proclaim it. And yet the seals are broken. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has come to open the book and break its seals. Fate is no longer cruel darkness to us Christians. Whatever darkness may lie before our feet, at every step which we take into the future the guiding stars shine above us, and at our side stands the faithful guide. And how do these holy superscriptions of our life run? 1. We read first the words, Walk before God. In everything that thou doest, ask what is good, what is true before God. How does He speak to thee by His voice, conscience? You bear in yourselves the dominion over all that approaches from without, whether with allurements or threats. You bear in yourselves the measure of things. 2. Perceive, then, this the second inscription and precept of life. It is: “All things are yours!” The Divine and exalted right of man over all creatures is here proclaimed to us. And this includes his freedom and his dominion—the freedom of his soul from the outer world, and the dominion of his spirit over it. Is it not, then, you who turn misfortune into prosperity, and acquire strength in trial, and in exercising patience learn courage and self-conquest, the highest work of man? Is it not you who ennoble good fortune, and place it in the service of the Spirit, and use it in order to lead yourselves farther, and to lessen the want round about you, and to fashion everything that is near you into a life worthy of man? 3. Now you perceive, in fine, the third superscription of the book of life: “The fruit of the Spirit is love!” It puts forth, perhaps, many and beautiful flowers, and the powerful stem raises itself and extends its wide shadowing branches over the extent of the earth; but the ripe fruit of the Spirit is love, and that alone. We feel, everything else is only falling flowers, only brilliant appearance; love alone remains. We feel it is cold, and solitary, and joyless in the world without love. And our liberty and moral power also against the world and fate, how can we

preserve them if we stand not firmly bound together in the fellowship of the brethren?—one extending the hand to the other whenever he sinks down, one comforting the other in word and deed when a heavy blow falls upon his head. (*Dr. Schwarz.*) *The glorified Christ*:—I. THE SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD. God, like the painter, poet, builder, works by plan. Is the conflict of life purposeless? Evidences of plan and purpose—in nature. Everywhere there are proofs of an intelligent mind and Divine purpose. This truth is stamped on our lives from first to last. We are limited, dependent, controlled everywhere. Life itself is not ours to determine, nor its particular form and circumstances. Even where we have a choice, the circumstances between which we choose are not in our power. The duration of life is determined apart from our choice. If thought is ours, the power to think is given. Again, the great variety there is among men, modified, too, by so many circumstances of birth, education, &c., variety in regard to temperament, position, success, anticipation. And so in regard to the inner life and the life and course of the Church. Wise builders always work by plan. The wisest are most like God. II. THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP. (*R. V. Pryce, M.A.*) *The unsealing of the plan of universal destiny*:—I. THERE IS IN THE DIVINE MIND A PLAN OF UNIVERSAL DESTINY. 1. Destiny is planned. 2. Destiny is comprehensive. The scroll was full of writing. 3. Destiny is effective. The book was in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. It was not carelessly thrown on the ground. II. THE PLAN OF UNIVERSAL DESTINY IS CONCEALED. 1. It is concealed by the mystery in which it is inherently involved. 2. It is concealed by the intellectual inability of man. III. THE PLAN OF UNIVERSAL DESTINY SOMETIMES AWAKENS MENTAL ANGUISH ON THE PART OF MAN. 1. Men often experience mental anguish as they contemplate the mystery of destiny. Fears of—(1) Disappointment. (2) Misapprehension. (3) Sympathy. 2. There is much to console the mental anguish which the thought of destiny may awaken. IV. THE PLAN OF UNIVERSAL DESTINY IS REVEALED BY CHRIST IN HIS MEDIATORIAL RELATIONSHIP TO MANKIND. 1. Destiny is unsealed by strength. 2. Destiny is revealed by humiliation. 3. Destiny is revealed by sacrifice. Lessons: (1) That all the events of the future are arranged according to a wise and comprehensive plan. (2) That in contemplation of the future, all mental distress which may arise should be consoled by the revelation which Christ has made. (3) That Christ is above all created intelligence in His mediatorial relationship to the future. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The song of the book*:—I. I notice first, that under any really feasible interpretation, THE JUDICIAL ELEMENT MUST, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, BE INCLUDED. Different minds have discerned in this symbol “the Book of the Secret Decrees of God,” “the Book of Destiny,” “the Book of the Inheritance,” “the Book of Universal History,” “the Book of the Future,” or “the Book of Providence.” But every one of these interpretations—different but not contradictory—carries a reference to judgment in its right hand. Whatever more may be “written within and on the back side,” the handwriting of Christ against His enemies is undoubtedly there. Its very position, it has been well shown, is an indication of its judicial character. It lies “in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne”; in that hand “which teaches terrible things,” and is “full of righteousness,” and at which Christ is set “until His enemies are made His footstool.” As each seal is opened, ministers of Divine retribution are seen going forth. Effects like these could only follow the opening of a Book of Judgment. II. I observe next, THAT EVERYTHING IN THE VISION, IN WHICH THIS SYMBOL OCCURS, SEEMS TO SPEAK TO US OF THE DOMAIN OF PROVIDENCE. Those prelusions of the consummation of all things, of which Providence is so full, salute us here. It is the “Lamb,” the redemptive heart of Providence; the “Lion,” the avenging arm of Providence; the “root of David,” the kingly power in Providence, who prevails to open the book. He is the Lord mighty to save or destroy. And finally, His power to deal with this great mystery of time, the oppression of the righteous by the wicked, is represented as a joy to all who are embraced in the great scheme of Providence. It should be borne in mind that this worship, like the vision in which it occurs, was revealed as consolation for John. He was in tears because no man could unseal the book. It is a most suggestive fact, that the first word of the consolation comes from one of the representatives of the redeemed. It was one of the elders who said to the exile, “Weep not!” To that elder and his companions the seals on the book had caused no anxiety. The secret of the Lord was in their hearts. They knew that there was one eye from which the things written in that book were never hid. In the light which breaks upon him now, the tears of the captive-prophet have disappeared.

The mystery which lay upon his soul is unloosed. The book is in the hands of his Lord. "What no man in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth" could do, has been done by Christ. He has prevailed "to open the book, and to loose the seven seals." The joy of the seer seems to palpitate up into the throngs of heaven. And if we would know the character of that book, we must open our minds to the thoughts which find expression in this song. 1. The song is first of all a song of thanks: "Thou hast redeemed us." There was such power in His sympathy, that it penetrated, and used for redemption purposes, every peculiarity of nature, and race, and sphere. There was such power in His grace, that it broke down, in their hearts, the might of indifference, and enmity, and lust, and sin. 2. Again, the song of the elders is more than personal thanksgiving. It is a prophecy of consolation as well. It is sung for John and the suffering Church. 3. Besides being personal thanksgiving and prophecy, the song of the redeemed is worship of the Redeemer. And it is the judicial aspect of His work they praise. The object of this worship is seated on the throne of the universe. The song is often quoted as if it were an acknowledgment of His worth as a sacrifice: "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain." But it is more, by being less, than this. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain." The fact that He was slain is celebrated here, only because it imparts the right to open the book. The singers take their stand on the fact that He is judge, because He is first of all sacrifice. He is worthy to unloose the seals of judgment, because He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We are accustomed to connect the death of Christ with the outflowings of His mercy; the connection here is between that death and the outflowings of His justice. In the depths of this song I find the great faith, that there is a Judge in the earth who judgeth righteously, and Christ the crucified is He. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *The sealed book:*—But these prelusive judgments are little known. The book is sealed with seals. We do not see its contents, or we do not see them as what they are. The retributions it reveals are not known as retributions. Our knowledge at the best is limited, our insight dim and poor, and the "thoughts" of the Judge "are very deep." 1. The habit of expecting from the future what is already by our side is one cause of our blindness to the retributions of the present. We underrate the present, and are surprised when it brings a judgment to our door. Every age, I might say every day, is a judgment-day. "Every morning doth He bring judgment to light." Even while I write these words the term of probation for some life, or scheme, or institution, or nation, is coming to a close. Over a thousand spheres of action, the judgment hour is striking. 2. Our subjection to sense, and the consequent tendency to judge according to appearance, is another cause of the dimness which seems to lie on the world of retribution. "Appearance" is no mark of well-being in the sphere of Providence. 3. A third cause of our blindness to such events is the foregone conclusion that retribution is only present when the last results of sin have been reached. Judgment manifests itself in the partial as well as in the complete developments of evil. 4. A fourth cause which seals up the prelusive judgments from our view is the mistaken conceptions of retribution which we entertain. We are wrong in our notions of its nature and manifestations. Even when retributions are present and palpable to the senses, we will not believe them to be outbreakings of the Divine wrath on sin. We suffer ourselves to be blinded by phrases which hide out the truth. We say—we think we have explained them when we say—they are the accidents of circumstances, or the natural fruits of evil. We do not see that there can be no such accidents. We do not sufficiently remember that the natural fruits of evil are themselves a doom. We insist on extraneous and formal dooms. Retributions must come forth clad in miraculous and visible garments. It must be a handwriting on the wall, a portent in the heavens, a sounding of trumpets in the sky. But this is merely the aberration of our ignorance. Retribution can only on rare occasions be clothed in formalities like these. Its manifestations, for the most part, and of necessity, are not miraculous, but natural. It is at work when we, who are in its presence, see only decay, or disease, or accident. (*Ibid.*) *God's library:*—Four volumes are mentioned in the Scriptures as belonging to God's celestial library. 1. The "book of the living" (Psa. lxi. 28), in which are enumerated all items of personal human history, as God has decreed them (Psa. cxxxix. 16). 2. The "book of the law" (Gal. iii. 10), in which are included all God's demands for obedience and duty. 3. The "book of remembrance" (Mal. iii. 16), in which are noted all the incidents of each believer's continued experience (Psa. lvi. 8).

4. The "book of life" (Phil. iv. 3), in which are recorded all the names of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and no others (Rev. xx. 15). Of these perhaps the likeliest to be the one John now saw in God's right hand was the first, containing the secret decrees of Divine providence concerning human life and the destiny of nations. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The book and the song*:—I. THE BOOK OF MYSTERY. 1. It is instructive to inquire where the seer saw the book. 2. It is also instructive to notice the fulness of Divine counsels contained in the book. 3. The carefulness with which its contents are secured. II. A STARTLING CHALLENGE AND THE PROFOUND SUSPENSE. 1. By whom made. 2. The nature of the challenge. 3. The profound suspense. (1) What a stern rebuke to all the daring speculations of unaided reason concerning the future purposes of God! (2) How painful the thought of the unbroken seals to the apocalyptic seer! III. THE CONSOLING ANNOUNCEMENT. 1. The character of the announcement. 2. The ground of the consolation. IV. A MARVELLOUS SCENE. 1. A symbolic representation of our Lord in heaven. (1) "In the midst of the throne," &c. Christ is the central figure of all the heavenly hosts. (2) "A Lamb as it had been slain," &c. Christ's death is the ground of all heavenly glory. 2. A symbolic representation of the investiture of Christ with full control of all the purposes of the Father. (1) These purposes are symbolised in the book. (2) The investiture is symbolised in Christ becoming possessor of the book. 3. A symbolic representation of the joy which will fill all heaven and earth and sea when Christ is thus honoured. (1) The song now sung was a "new song." (2) The inspiration of the song was the worthiness of Christ to take the book and to open its seals. (3) The theme of the song—redemption through Christ's blood; the exaltation of the saved to the positions of kings and priests, blessed hope of reigning over the earth. Learn—1. That all the events of the future, as well as those of the past, are under the supreme control of our Lord as Redeemer. 2. That to Christ we owe every ray of light that this book sheds on the future. 3. That while terrible judgments are announced in the book against the wicked, the issue will be most glorious for the Church of Christ, and the result of Christ's administration will be the triumph of holiness. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *The plan of the Divine government*:—1. The plan of the Divine government is settled and adjusted with as much certainty and precision as if it had been put upon record, or written in a book. 2. The work of Messiah is a great and glorious undertaking. 3. There is a mixture of good and evil in the temper and conduct of the best of men. John wept when he had no proper occasion for sorrow. In so far as his grief sprung from inattention to Christ it was criminal; but in so far as it manifested his public spirit, and sprung from a fear lest the Church might be destitute of any branch of knowledge that might be advantageous for her, it was truly generous and patriotic, and therefore much to be commended. 4. There is a constitutional fitness in the person of Christ for the work of mediation. He is both the root and the offspring of David; He is a daysman who can lay His hand upon both, and make up the breach between them; and as there is no other medium of friendly intercourse with God, it nearly concerns us to be savingly acquainted with Him, as the way, the truth, and the life. (*R. Culbertson.*) *Tears are effectual orators*:—Luther got much of his insight into God's matters by this means. It is said of Sir Philip Sidney that when he met with anything that he well understood not, he would break out into tears. (*J. Trapp.*) *The Lion of the tribe of Judah . . . hath prevailed to open the book*.—*Christ the Lion of the tribe of Judah*:—1. Whereas John is comforted by one of the elders, we see that the Lord never leaves His own comfortless. 2. Where He says, "Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah," &c., we are taught for all solid comfort to look up to Christ the fountain thereof; and as Samson got honey out of his slain lion, so shall we the sweetness of comfort from Him. 3. The elder speaks of Him in His titles out of Moses and Isaiah; and so do all faithful teachers speak of Him according to the Scriptures. 4. Christ is said to be not only a Lamb for meekness, innocence, and patient suffering, but also a Lion for power and prevailing against all His foes and ours, which is both a comfort to His own and terror to His enemies. 5. Also where He is said to be of the tribe of Judah, and so to be man of our nature and come of men; it is likewise greatly to our comfort that He has so dignified our nature in His person, wherein now it is glorified, passing by the angels. 6. Where He is called "the Root of David," who was also a Branch or the Son of David, we see as He was man; so likewise God, and the root or stock which bears up all the faithful and can never fail. 7. He is said to have prevailed to open the book, &c.—to wit, with the Father—as our Mediator and Advocate, which is to our great comfort, that whatever (for the

good of His Church) He seeks of the Father, He prevails therein; yea, whatever we shall seek in His name, it shall be granted us. 8. He prevails to open the book and the seven seals thereof. It is He, then, only who is "The Word," as the Wisdom of the Father to decree, so the Word to declare, and the Power to effectuate, that Great Prophet of His Church who came from the bosom of the Father to reveal the Lord's counsel, and His goodwill to men: hear Him. (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*) *The Lion of the tribe of Judah*.—I. JESUS IS CALLED A LION BECAUSE OF THE UNPARALLELED COURAGE WHICH BELONGS TO HIM. The work which He undertook to execute was one of incomparable magnitude. Had it been proposed to the mightiest archangel that stands before God's throne, he would have shrunk in timidity from the task. For what was it? It was to reconcile things apparently incongruous, and to perform things apparently impossible. It was to satisfy the demands of justice, and yet, at the same time, yield abundant scope for the exercise of mercy. It was to secure pardon to a condemned race, and yet maintain inviolate the honour of the law which had sentenced them to condemnation. And, in addition to all this, it was to combat single-handed the powers and principalities of hell. Who among the sons of the mighty could have presumed that he was equal to such a work? And yet, behold, in the fulness of time, One born of a woman undertakes this mighty office. The difficulties and dangers of the work were not hidden from Him. Yet did not the prospect, awful as it was, deter Him from engaging in the service. Nor, when the very worst was immediately in view, did it shake the intrepidity of His purpose. Of His courage, even as of His love, it may be said that it was "stronger than death."

II. COURAGE, HOWEVER, AS WE ALL KNOW, MAY RESIDE IN A BOSOM TO WHICH THE POWER OF ACCOMPLISHING WHAT IT UNDERTAKES IS DENIED. There may be the will to do and the soul to dare what the hand is incompetent to execute. But it was not thus with the blessed Jesus, who undertook the bold work of saving lost men. His strength was equal to His courage, and He had power to execute all that His boldness purposed. Being God as well as man, no burden was too heavy for Him, no trial too severe. III. THE IDEA SUGGESTED BY THE METAPHOR UNDER CONSIDERATION MAY WELL ANIMATE YOU TO STEADFASTNESS IN THE WORK OF THE LORD. Like your Divine Master, you too shall have powerful opposition to encounter, and formidable enemies to contend against. But the example which He has set may well arouse you to activity. (*J. L. Adamson.*) *The all-conquering Christ*.—It is needless to say to the Biblical student that this imagery has its base on Gen. xlix. 8-10.

I. THE VICTORIOUS LEADERSHIP AND POWER OF JUDAH. Of Judah, the old man says that he shall be chief amongst his brethren. "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; . . . thy father's children shall bow down before thee." He is to be a victorious power. "Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies . . . from the prey thou art gone up." His is to be a legislative and regal power. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet." He is to be the true centre of government, the rallying point of the world's hopes; "to him shall the gathering of the people be." Let us trace the history to see the facts that fulfil the prophecy. Two hundred years after the old man's dying words were spoken, we find the children of Israel going up out of Egypt, and God gives directions about the order of their encampment. "On the east side . . . shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch" (Numb. ii. 3). Why is Judah assigned the principal place in the front of the tabernacle? Why is he here the chief tribe? Why should not Reuben, the first-born, be appointed here? There is no explanation to be given except that for his sin he had been displaced, "and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright," and "Judah was made the chief ruler" (1 Chron. v. 1, 2). Again, in Numb. vii. 12, when the offerings were to be made, Nahshon . . . of the tribe of Judah was assigned the dignity of offering first. When the tribes had passed into Canaan the remnants of the people were to be overcome, and Israel requires of the Lord who shall be put in the forefront of the fray, who should lead to battle. "Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the lands into his hand" (Judges i. 2, 3). Still later the tribe of Benjamin revolt (Judges xx. 18) and the people "went to the house of God" and "asked counsel of God. Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up first." II. But this all-conquering and all-controlling power of Judah but symbolised THE REAL ROYALTY AND SUPREME SWAY OF JESUS CHRIST, and hence we go on to the New Testament—the family record of the Lord Jesus, "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." The old promise of Jacob in Genesis was that

this regal might, this conquering splendour, should abide with Judah till the Peace-bringer, the Shiloh, should come (Gen. xlix. 10). (*J. T. Gracey, D.D.*) *The book of the Divine purposes opened, not altered*:—The Lamb is said here to prevail to open the book. We often suppose that He prevailed by His sacrifice to alter the Divine purposes. We often say that the Divine will, or justice, or purity, demanded something of man which he could not render. That he was doomed to destruction for that failure; that the Lamb interposed to avert this sentence; that He paid the creature's debt; that so He satisfied the mind of Him who sat on the throne; that many threads are woven into this theory which are drawn from the practical faith of men, from their experience of their own wants, from the lessons they have learnt in Scripture, I gladly own. But that that practical faith has suffered, and does suffer cruelly, from the speculations which have been mixed with it; that the hearts of men crave for a satisfaction which this scheme of divinity does not afford them; that if they would listen to the teaching of Scripture they would find that satisfaction, I must maintain also. How naturally men conscious of evil wish to change the purpose of a Power which they think is ready to punish this evil; how eagerly they seek for mediators who they suppose may effect this change; how they may arrive at last at the conception of a Kehama who by prayers and sacrifice can bend the will of the gods wholly to his will, the mythology of all nations proves abundantly. Christian theology scatters such dark imaginations by revealing the Highest Ruler as the All-Good, Him who sits on the throne as a Being like a jasper or a sardine stone to look upon; by revealing the Lamb that was slain as the perfect sharer of His counsels; the perfect fulfiller of His will; the perfect revealer of His designs to mankind; the perfect Redeemer of the world from the dominion of false, hateful, cruel gods which they had imagined, and which upheld all falsehood, hatred, cruelty in the rulers; the perfect atoner of man with the Father of Light, in whom is no variableness nor the shadow of turning. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*)

Vers. 6, 7. A Lamb as it had been slain.—*The Lamb and the book*:—I. GOD HAS A PLAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIS CHURCH. 1. The plan is on a large scale. It fills a "book." Redemption is God's greatest effort. 2. God is resolved to work out the plan. "Right hand"—symbol of executive energy. 3. The plan is an infinitely difficult one. "Sealed with seven seals." How to reconcile man to God, the great mystery of the universe. 4. The plan is essential to the happiness of humanity. John "wept" when no one could open the book. II. CHRIST IS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIS CHURCH. 1. He is qualified by appointment. "My servant." 2. He is qualified by character. "Lamb." 3. He is qualified by suffering. "Slain." 4. He is qualified by perfection of ability. "Seven horns," &c. Perfection of knowledge and power. III. THE ADMINISTRATION BY CHRIST OF GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIS CHURCH IS PRODUCTIVE OF UNIVERSAL JOY. 1. The joy of the Church (vers. 8-10). 2. The joy of the angels (vers. 11, 12). 3. The joy of the creation (ver. 13). 4. The joy of God. "This is My beloved Son," &c. (*B. D. Johns.*) *The Lamb in the midst of the throne*:—I. THE BLESSED OBJECT WHICH JOHN BEHELD IN HEAVEN. 1. The title given Him is most endearing. (1) A favourite one with the inspired writers (Isa. liii. 7; John i. 29; 1 Pet. i. 19, &c.). St. John uses the expression nearly thirty times, and always in most important connections. (2) An appropriate and expressive title. 2. The position He occupies is pre-eminently striking. (1) Conspicuous. (2) Dignified. And if such be His position in heaven, should He be placed in the background upon earth? 3. The attributes symbolically ascribed to Him are highly imposing. These are power and wisdom. II. THE SPECIAL ACT WHICH HE IS REPRESENTED AS PERFORMING. III. THE FEELINGS OF JOY AND ADORATION WITH WHICH THE CIRCUMSTANCE REFERRED TO WAS REGARDED. 1. By the redeemed. 2. By the angelic hosts. 3. By the whole intelligent creation. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The Lamb in the midst of the throne*:—I. THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE. The designation of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, appealed to one class of associations in the apostle's mind; the appearance of a lamb as it had been slain, to another. The design was to combine the two, as better calculated than each one singly to convey the full impression of the person who had prevailed to open the sealed book. A lamb was selected by God from the period of the Fall as best calculated, by its natural meekness and innocence, to typify the real propitiation for sin which He had provided from the foundation of the world. As such He was foretold by Isaiah, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." As such He

is pointed out by John the Baptist, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" and as such He is described by Peter, "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The Book of Revelation records the triumphs of the Lamb. The Old Testament had given the history of the preparation for His coming; the New had tracked His sorrowful course on the earth; all that was now needed was to trace the effects of the death of Christ upon future ages of the world, and throw out some intimations of its blissful and interminable reward. "A Lamb as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne," suggests that certain indications remain in the glorified person of the Redeemer in the midst of its purity and splendour, of its oblation on the Cross. Were the sufferings of Christ the foundation of the glory that should follow? Is His exaltation in proportion to His humiliation? Then must the glory of His person be in proportion to its shame, and the radiance of His scars pre-eminently bright. This becomes the everlasting memorial to the redeemed of their title to those realms, and of the ever-living intercession within the veil. Justice requires the detention of this memento of their chartered bliss. II. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHALLENGE BY THE LAMB TO OPEN THE SEALED BOOK. As the rising sun chases from a whole hemisphere the gloom and silence of night, burnishes the billows, gems the crystal caves, tinges the forests, gilds the waving corn, enamels the flowers, fringes the clouds, empurples the sky, fills cities with life, homes with mirth, and groves with songs; so the appearance of the Lamb on the throne turns the stillness of creation into life, the gloom into day, the silence into songs. The joy that spread through the whole creation when the Lamb took the sealed book intimates that all creation was interested in its contents. The book in the hand of Christ insured its fulfilment.

(G. Rogers.) *Christ in heaven*:—1. There is a wide difference between the present and former condition of the Saviour. 2. The exaltation of Christ has made no change upon the spirit and disposition by which He is actuated. 3. Jesus Christ is invested with a threefold office. He is here symbolised by a Lamb, which naturally reminds us of His sacrificial work and of His priestly character; but, as this Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, He must be a king and a prophet as well as a priest. 4. Jesus Christ is a Divine person. 5. Saints are under peculiar obligations to praise and honour God. 6. See the true and direct way for relief to the burdened mind. Is the soul afflicted with a deep sense of guilt? Look to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (R. Culbertson.) *The appearance of the Mediator in heaven*:—I. THAT THE MEDIATOR APPEARS AS THE CENTRE OF HEAVENLY SOCIETY. 1. The position is indicative of the pre-eminence of Christ. While on earth He was despised and rejected of men; in heaven He is the centre of enjoyment and worship. 2. This position is indicative of the attraction of Christ. We are assured that Christ is not merely the centre of the society of heaven because of His royal dignity, but also because of the beauty of His character, the glory of His redemptive work, the wealth of His mercy, the depth of His condescension, and the wondrous achievements of His grace in bringing so many to the promised kingdom. 3. This position is indicative of the supreme life and activity of Christ. The Redeemer stood in the midst of the throne and of the company of heaven; thus indicating His rising up from the grave, His entrance upon a life which should never again yield to death, and His readiness for the redemptive work of the future.

II. THAT THE MEDIATOR APPEARS WITH THE TOKENS OF REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING. "A Lamb as it had been slain" (ver. 6). 1. This figure indicates the gentle spirit of Christ. He deals tenderly with wounded spirits, now that He is in heaven, even as He did when on earth. 2. This figure indicates the painful sufferings of Christ. Here then is great encouragement for all penitent sinners, in that humanity is represented in heaven, and in that Christ can never forget the humiliation He endured to bring them to God. III. THAT THE MEDIATOR APPEARS AS EXECUTING THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK. 1. He accomplished a work vastly important to mankind. Surely nothing could be of greater importance than that man should have light cast upon destiny. 2. He accomplished a work which none other being could achieve. All created intelligences had been challenged to open the book which they saw in the Divine hand, but were not equal to the task. (J. S. Exell, M.A.) *Christ the expounder of the mystery*:—I. CHRIST, AS THE EXPOUNDER OF THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, OCCUPIES A CENTRAL POSITION, AND ASSUMES THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ASPECTS. 1. The position He occupies. He is in the "midst of the throne"; He is in the very centre of the intelligent creation. He attracts all—He enlightens all—He governs all—He blesses all with new life and beauty. 2. The aspect He assumes. In His person are combined the marks

of suffering humanity and the attributes of perfect Divinity. II. CHRIST, AS THE EXPOUNDER OF THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, AWAKENS, IN ALL CLASSES OF HOLY MIND, INEFFABLE DELIGHT. 1. Here is humility: they "fell down before the Lamb." The profoundest reverence mingled with their joy. 2. Here is harmony: here are "harp"—emblems of music. 3. Here is acceptableness: "golden vials full of odours." Its breathing ecstasies ascend as fragrant incense to God. 4. Here is prayerfulness: "the prayers of saints." Death terminates the saint's need of prayer for certain objects, such as forgiveness, deliverance from error, and victory over foes, but not the spirit of prayer—the spirit of felt dependence upon God. III. CHRIST, AS THE EXPOUNDER OF THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, IS DEEMED WORTHY OF THE OFFICE, BECAUSE OF HIS REDEMPTIVE ACHIEVEMENT.

1. He has redeemed. The redemption of man consists in a deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. 2. He has redeemed by sacrifice. What was the sacrifice? A few self-denying efforts?—a world? No; His life. "By Thy blood"; by the sacrifice of Thy life—Thyself. 3. He has redeemed, by sacrifice, all classes. "Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." The atonement is designed to redeem the world, and some of all its multitudinous sections have been thus redeemed, and millions more are to follow yet. 4. He has redeemed all classes, by sacrifice, to the highest honours. They are priests, in relation to their Maker, offering up the sacrifice of a devout and grateful soul; they are kings, in relation to their race, wielding a governing influence over their thoughts and hearts. A true Christian is a moral sovereign. (*Homilist.*) *The Lamb in glory.*—I. Jesus in heaven appears in His sacrificial character; and I would have you note that THIS CHARACTER IS ENHANCED BY OTHER CONSPICUOUS POINTS. Its glory is not diminished, but enhanced, by all the rest of our Lord's character: the attributes, achievements, and offices of our Lord all concentrate their glory in His sacrificial character, and all unite in making it a theme for loving wonder. 1. We read that He is the Lion of the tribe of Juda; by which is signified the dignity of His office, as King, and the majesty of His person, as Lord. The lion is at home in fight, and "the Lord is a man of war." Like a lion, He is courageous. Though He be like a lamb for tenderness, yet not in timidity. 2. Further, it is clear that He is a champion: "The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed." What was asked for was worthiness, not only in the sense of holiness, but in the sense of valour. One is reminded of a legend of the Crusades. A goodly castle and estate awaited the coming of the lawful heir: he, and he only, could sound the horn which hung at the castle gate; but he who could make it yield a blast would be one who had slain a heap of Paynim in the fight, and had come home victorious from many a bloody fray. So here, no man in earth or heaven had valour and renown enough to be worthy to take the mystic roll out of the hand of the Eternal. Our champion was worthy. 3. In this wonderful vision we see Jesus as the familiar of God. To Him there is no danger in a close approach to the infinite glory, for that glory is His own. 4. We observe, in addition to all this, that He is the prophet of God. "He who unveils the eternal will of the Highest is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." 5. Our Lord always was, and is now, acknowledged to be Lord and God. Yet, in the glory of His Deity, He disdains not to appear as the Lamb that has been slain. This still is His chosen character. Write, then, the passion of your Lord upon the tablets of your hearts, and let none erase the treasured memory. Think of Him mainly and chiefly as the sacrifice for sin. II. In the second place, note that, IN THIS CHARACTER, JESUS IS THE CENTRE OF ALL. "In the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The Lamb is the centre of the wonderful circle which makes up the fellowship of heaven. 1. From Him, as a standpoint, all things are seen in their places. Looking up at the planets from this earth, which is one of them, it is difficult to comprehend their motions—progressive, retrograde, or standing still; but the angel in the sun sees all the planets marching in due course, and circling about the centre of their system. Standing where you please upon this earth, and within human range of opinion, you cannot see all things aright, nor understand them till you come to Jesus, and then you see all things from the centre. The man who knows the incarnate God, slain for human sins, stands in the centre of truth. 2. The Lamb's being in the midst signifies, also, that in Him they all meet in one. Christ is the summing up of all existence. Seek you Godhead? There it is. Seek you manhood? There it is. Wish you the spiritual? There it is in His human soul. Desire you the material? There it is in His human body. Our Lord hath, as it were, gathered up the ends of all things, and hath

bound them into one. 3. Being in the centre, to Him they all look. As the Father's eyes are always on Jesus, so are the eyes of the living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders which represent the Church in its Divine life and the Church in its human life. All who have been washed in His blood perpetually contemplate His beauties. 4. All seem to rally round Him as a guard around a king. All things ordained of the Father work towards Christ, as their centre; and so stand all the redeemed, and all the angels waiting about the Lord, as swelling His glory and manifesting His praise. III. Thirdly, our Lord is seen in heaven as the Lamb slain, and IN THIS CHARACTER HE EXHIBITS PECULIAR MARKS. None of those marks derogate from His glory as the sacrifice for sin; but they tend to instruct us therein. 1. Note well the words: "Stood a Lamb as it had been slain." "Stood," here is the posture of life; "as it had been slain," here is the memorial of death. Our view of Jesus should be two-fold; we should see His death and His life: we shall never receive a whole Christ in any other way. 2. Note, next, another singular combination in the Lamb. He is called "a little lamb"; for the diminutive is used in the Greek; but yet how great He is! In Jesus, as a Lamb, we see great tenderness and exceeding familiarity with His people. He is not the object of dread. A lamb is the most approachable of beings. Yet there is about the little Lamb an exceeding majesty. The elders no sooner saw Him than they fell down before Him. 3. He hath seven horns and seven eyes. His power is equal to His vigilance; and these are equal to all the emergencies brought about by the opening of the seven seals of the Book of Providence. IV. Jesus appears eternally as a Lamb, and IN THIS CHARACTER HE IS UNIVERSALLY ADORED. 1. Before He opened one of the seals this worship commenced. We trust Him where we cannot trace Him. Before He begins His work as the revealing Mediator, the Church adores Him for His work as a sacrifice. Jesus our Lord is worshipped not so much for what benefits He will confer as for Himself. 2. That adoration begins with the Church of God. The Church of God, in all its phases, adores the Lamb. If you view the Church of God as a Divine creation, the embodiment of the Spirit of God, then the living creatures fall down before the Lamb. No God-begotten life is too high to refuse obeisance to the Lamb of God. 3. The Lamb is not only worshipped by the Church, He is worshipped by angels. What a wonderful gathering together of certain legions of the Lord's hosts we have before us in this chapter! 4. Nay, it is not merely the Church and angelhood; but all creation, east, west, north, south, highest, lowest, all adore Him. All life, all space, all time, immensity, eternity; all these become one mouth for song, and all the song is, "Worthy is the Lamb." 5. Now, then, if this be so, shall we ever allow anybody in our presence to lower the dignity of Christ, our sacrifice? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The Lamb in the midst of the throne:—I. THE SCENE IN HEAVEN. 1. A redemption scene. There is not one person or one object in the heavenly mansions but stands closely connected with the wonders of redeeming love. 2. A rejoicing, blissful scene. Let us mark here not merely the fact that it is a scene of triumphant song, but especially the object that causes the gladness, and the difference in the mode of expressing it. We have here four different songs. First, the song of the living creatures; secondly, the song of the elders; thirdly, the song of the angels; fourthly, the song of all creation. But the one grand question is, who is the object of praise? Clearly, in all cases, the Lamb on the throne; all eyes are turned to Him; all hearts fixed on Him. He is the life, the soul, the all in all of these songs. Heaven is full of triumph. The universe is glad in its exalted and crowned Saviour. 3. A communion scene. Observe how clearly this is set forth in the terms of the text. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne; but the elders, the living creatures, the angels, are all holding fellowship with the Lamb, and with one another. He is the object of all their love, the centre of all attraction, the source of all their light, and life and joy. The Eternal Three are holding their blessed communion of love, into the depths of which no creature may penetrate. But the four living creatures, the elders, the angels, are holding intercourse with that Lamb, and with one another. All are linked to the throne by love. Now remember that God's family are partly on earth, and partly in heaven; some at home with their Father, others still pilgrims and sojourners in a foreign land. But Jehovah has no greater love for the saints now in glory than for you. Jesus is not more certainly in the midst of the Church in triumph than in the midst of her in tribulation. There is not a more certain fellowship with Him around the throne than in this vale of tears. There is positively no other opening up of the wells of salvation to the glorified saints than to us. The grand thing is, the Lamb is the same, the life and

love are the same. Yes, and all the more you can feel your own poverty, necessity and sinfulness, the more will you exalt the Lamb as your all; and then the sense of your necessity, and the sight of His riches and glory endearing Him to your soul, will bring Him near to your heart. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE THINGS AND CERTAIN OTHER THINGS HERE SPECIFIED OF THE LAMB ON THE THRONE, AS THE FOUNDATION OF THEM. 1. The most prominent is the death of the Lamb. He appears a Lamb as it had been slain. It is in His death that all the virtue is found which produces the results to which we have directed your minds. The death of that Lamb is death to all our fears; for we see how He that spared not His own Son will with Him also freely give us all things. That death of the Lamb is also the death of a guilty conscience; for while reposing on this Lamb of God, the effect of His righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever. His death is even the death of death itself; for as we fix our faith on the throne, we hear Him say, "I am He that liveth," &c. 2. The attitude of the Lamb. He stands in the midst of the throne. This is manifestly His attitude as the intercessor of His people. He has entered in once for all into the holiest of all, there to appear in the presence of God for us. A soldier of old, who was accused of being a traitor to his country, came into the presence of his sovereign, showed the scars on his breast, the memorials of his courage while fighting in the thickest of the battle, and was there received with applause in the face of all his accusers. 3. The freshness of the Lamb slain is a wonderful sight. The Lamb appears standing, bleeding still, as if the sword of justice had been just then drawn from the wounds it inflicted, and the blood were still streaming from the victim. It is not like the blood of bulls and of goats, that could grow cold, and hard, and unfit for sacrifice; but through eternal ages the Father sees that blood, and saints behold it, in all the power of a recent death. By faith the sinner ever sees it too, and has no fear it shall ever lose its efficacy with God. III. THE CONNECTION OF BOTH THESE FORMER HEADS OF DISCOURSE WITH THE SPECIAL WORK OF COMMUNION TO-DAY. 1. Now you see prominently here that we are alike showing forth the cross and crown-rights of our glorious Immanuel. I have little fear that you forget His death on a day like this; but I am certain that we do often overlook His exaltation. And now we put ourselves afresh under His sway, and vow submission to His law as a rule of life and holiness. 2. There is an inseparable connection between this and all the consolations of the believer. The Lamb has not only the seven crowns or seven horns, but He has also the seven eyes, or seven spirits of God. Christ has all authority and power in heaven and on earth, and He has all the spiritual graces to bestow. The power would be useless without the spiritual influences to shed forth, and these again would be in vain without the rightful authority to bestow them. But Christ has both. 3. Another thing is the hope of the Church in the second coming of the Lord. (*John Walker.*) *The slain Lamb, beheld in heaven by the redeemed*:—I. THERE WILL BE A GLORIOUS MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD JESUS IN THE HEAVENLY WORLD. 1. The manifestation of the Saviour's person. (1) In His exalted human nature. (2) In connection with His divinity. 2. The manifestation of the Saviour's offices. We speak here of a manifestation to the minds of the redeemed. (1) In this manner, for instance, they will be led to know and meditate upon His priesthood; a capacity in which He gave Himself as a sacrifice for us. And the redeemed, gazing upon Him thus, will dwell with enlarged comprehension upon the wonders of His dying love, in its source, in its process, and in its results. (2) In this manner, again, they will also know and meditate upon His royalty; a capacity in which He undertook the government of all beings and of all worlds, that their redemption and the purposes of the Godhead might be completed and performed. 3. In the heavenly world the manifestation of the Saviour's person and offices will be unchanging and eternal. Yes, there will be no shrouding of Him, there will be no withdrawal of Him, there will be no separation from Him. He is the Root of the tree; and that Root will never dry or fail to circulate its fertilising influences. He is the Shechinah of the temple; and that Shechinah will never be obscured or extinguished. He is the Sun of the firmament: and that Sun will never be clouded, or decline, or set, or cease from pouring out the beams of its "high, eternal noon." II. THE GLORIOUS MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD JESUS IN THE HEAVENLY WORLD WILL PRODUCE ANIMATING AND DELIGHTFUL INFLUENCES ON ALL TO WHOM IT IS REVEALED. 1. From the manifestation of the Lord Jesus there will be secured purity. The character of the Lord Jesus Himself is that of unsullied purity; and it is impossible but that there should be an assimilating influence exercised upon all those who are brought spiritually to commune with Him. Surely

those who have been redeemed by His precious blood from our apostate race, will find, in their contemplation of Him, reasons for incessant and invariable conformity to His likeness. Besides this, we must remember the nature of those employments, in which He will engage them while they shall dwell before Him. And so it is, according to the conclusion of inspiration, that "we shall be like Him" because we shall see Him as He is"; and we shall be like Him for ever, because we shall see Him for ever. 2. This manifestation will also be found to secure pleasure. 3. The manifestation of the Saviour's presence in the heavenly world also, we find, secures praise. (1) It is the praise of worship. (2) It is the praise of gratitude. (*J. Parsons.*) *The Lamb in the midst of the throne*:—I. The vision is set before us to remind us of THE METHOD OF ATONEMENT; it is by the blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Amid all the error abounding in this world there are few so infatuated as to maintain that they have not committed sin. How is this sin to be forgiven? By our repentance and reformation, may possibly be the reply. But till there is a work of grace upon the heart there can be no genuine repentance, no godly reformation. There may be feelings of remorse and regret; but these are not penitence. But granting, for the sake of argument, that man could of himself wring out a true repentance, still it can be shown that there is nothing in that repentance to make atonement for past sin. In no case can it make any amends to the insulted justice of God. Perhaps you now say that you trust in the mercy of God. You trust, you say, in the mercy of God; but how is this mercy to be exercised? Mercy is not the sole perfection of God. Holiness and justice—these are as essential to His nature as benevolence. How, then, can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? Human reason can give no intelligent, no satisfactory answer to this question. The mind feels that it has nothing to rest on; no truth on which the understanding can settle and the heart repose, till such time as it sees "a Lamb as it had been slain, in the very midst of the throne of God." II. The vision is set before us to remind us of THE CHARACTER OF JESUS, of His meekness and gentleness, so fitted to win the human heart. The question under the last head was, How is God to be reconciled to man? The question under this head is, How is man to be reconciled to God? How is his confidence to be won and his heart engaged? 1. I remark that in order to the gaining of the feelings of the heart it is needful that the conscience be pacified. A troubled conscience always leads the mind to avoid, as if instinctively, the remembrance of the party offended. There cannot be true and filial love in a mind in which conscience has not been appeased, nor can there be any of those allied graces, such as faith and confidence, hope and joy, which ought to fill and animate the soul. Not only so, but in order to gain the heart there must be a free, a full, and an instant forgiveness. It must be free; for it cannot be purchased or earned by us. It must be full; for if anything were left unforgiven the conscience would still reproach. Observe how all this is secured in the very view here presented to our faith. The Lamb, the image of gentleness, in the midst of the throne, shows that God is pacified, and the blood that flows from it proves that this has been done in strict accordance with justice. The conscience, the law in the heart, is satisfied, for God Himself, the law-giver, is satisfied. The believer, as he looks to the object set up, can say, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" 2. But secondly, in order to gain the heart there must be a lovely object presented to it. Such an object is presented in Jesus, a Lamb as it had been slain. The character of our Lord, set forth as an object on which the faith and affection of mankind may rest, has in itself everything that is grand and attractive. Just as there is a beauty in shape and colour that pleases the eye, and a sweetness of sound that delights the ear, so there is a moral loveliness that should draw towards it the affections of the soul. But here, in the character of God set forth in the face of His Son, we have all kinds of beauty meeting and harmoniously blending. In the Mediator the Divine and human natures are united in such a manner that the one does not destroy or overpower the other, but each retains its own properties, while the whole is a unity. The brightness of the Father's glory, without being shorn of a single ray, is seen in Christ under a milder lustre. Coldness and indifference are dispelled when we think that in drawing near to Jesus it is man coming to man. Unbelief vanishes when we realise that we have a brother's heart beating for us on the throne of glory. While our hearts are naturally drawn by sentiments and sympathies towards every brother man, there are certain men or classes of men towards whom we are attracted with greater force; as, for instance, towards all whose sensibilities are quick and whose feelings are tender.

And if the persons have themselves been in trouble, if their heart has been melted and softened by fiery trial, our hearts go towards them in yet fuller assurance. Disposed at all times to love such, we are especially drawn towards them when we ourselves are in trouble. It is by this attracting power that believers are drawn so closely to their Saviour. The brotherliness of His human nature, as well as the holy love of His Divine nature, are brought out before us in almost every incident of His life. The forsaken lift up their head and are comforted in communion with Him who was Himself forsaken. Every one acquainted with man's nature knows that if his heart is gained it must be gained by love. It must be by presenting a loving object. Such is the loving object set before us—a Lamb as it had been slain.

III. The vision is set before us to remind us that JESUS IS THE GRAND SOURCE OF JOY TO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN. As it was the view of Christ crucified that first gained the heart of the sinner, so it is a view of the same object seen in the visions of faith that continues to keep and fix his regards. The faith that saves does not consist of a single glance; "looking unto Jesus" is the habitual attitude of the believer's soul. Led to love the Lamb of God when on earth, trained by the Spirit of God and by all the dispensations of God to love Him more and more, he finds when he has crossed the dark valley of the shadow of death that the first object that meets his eye, and the most conspicuous, is a Lamb as it had been slain. But we cannot utter that which is unutterable, or describe that which is indescribable; and so we cannot picture or so much as conceive of that joy unspeakable and full of glory which the believer feels on his first entering into the presence of his Saviour, and which he is to enjoy for ever. True, there will be enjoyments not flowing so directly, though still proceeding indirectly from Him. There will be joys springing from the holy affections of confidence and love, which Christ by His Spirit plants in the breasts of His people. These graces, flowing, overflowing, and ever increasing, will be a source of great and ever-deepening happiness throughout eternity. Again, there will be joys springing from the glorious society of heaven, from the company of saints and angels. The question has often been asked, Where is heaven? We may not be able to answer it geographically, but we can answer it truly. It is where Jesus is. "Where I am, there ye shall be also." 1. A man must be born again before he can enter the kingdom of God. 2. Oh, that I had but lived in the days when Jesus sojourned on the earth! is the wish that will sometimes rise up in our breasts. Oh, that I had but seen His sacred person! Oh, that I had but heard His gracious words! These wishes, if proceeding from a sincere and sanctified heart, may yet be gratified. He who was dead is alive, and behold He liveth for evermore. As He was on earth, so is He now in heaven. (*J. McCosh.*)

The lion—the lamb:—He looked for a lion; he saw a lamb; the Greek says "little lamb"—lamb, emblem of meekness; little lamb, emblem of apparent meekness; slain, emblem of sacrifice. And yet this lamb had seven horns and seven eyes; the horns, emblem of power; seven horns, emblem of perfect power; eyes, emblem of wisdom; seven eyes, emblem of perfect wisdom. We continually make this mistake; we think that it is might that rules; we look for a lion. We think that the power in government is to be found in congresses, presidents, kings, armies, and have not yet learned that the power is in homes and wives and mothers. The disciples, when Christ came, were looking for a lion. They believed that the Messiah would appear suddenly, and the hosts of heaven would gather about Him and the hosts of paganism would gather against Him, and in one terrible last battle He would conquer and ride victorious over a bloody field. But when the angel told the watching shepherds the Messiah was come, the angel also said to them, "This is the sign of His Messiahship—that He is but a babe, and a babe cradled in a manger." "Because Thou hast died, and hast purchased us unto God, Thou art worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and glory and honour and blessings." Power belongs to love. The most potent of all earth's potencies is love. Only love has any right to power. It is not the lion, it is the lamb that conquers. The eagle is dead, the lamb lives on for ever. To the "lamb" belongs the world's wealth. It is not the greedy, ravening lions that acquire wealth, it is the lamb. Only the lamb is worthy to receive riches. They do not belong to shrewd selfishness, but to large-minded love. No man has a right to wealth save he who holds it as a trust and administers it in love. It is only love that is worthy to be rich; nay, it is only love that really has riches; for we have not what we hold in our hand, but what ministers to life. It is love serving and sacrificing itself for others that alone is worthy to be rich, that alone is truly rich. It is love only that is wisdom. The cynic and the misanthrope pride themselves on their knowledge

of human nature. They know just as much of it as a man might know of the cold earth who did not know there were any seeds beneath the surface. It is love only that is wise; for love sees the possibility in human nature which eyes blinded by cynicism fail to see. It is love which sees a future statesman in a rail-splitter. It is love which sees the emancipator of Europe in the monk. Love looks beneath the surface and sees the Divine in humanity. Wisdom belongs to love. It was the Lamb that saw in the publican Matthew the great biographer: the Lamb that saw in the recreant and unstable Simon the great Apostle Peter. And to the "Lamb" belong the glory, and the honour, and the blessing—not to power, not to wisdom, save as power and wisdom are used by love to make itself impart more. There are ranks and hierarchies of glory. Conscience is a great glory—conscience that sees righteousness and understands it; and faith is a great glory—faith that rejoices in the invisible and the eternal; and hope is a great glory—hope that beckons on the man to a larger and nobler and yet larger and nobler achievement. But best and highest of all is love. And so to love will come the song of universal blessing. To the lamb, and the little lamb as it had been slain. We worship Thee, O God, not for Thy power, though that power we might fear; nor for Thy wisdom, though that wisdom we must admire; we worship Thee for Thy love. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*)

The lamb on the throne:—The first impression of these words must have been one of the most startling originality. To that old world the idea of a lamb on a throne was a contradiction in terms. I do not mean that the ancient earth was a stranger to gentleness. To combine in one nature the elements of the lion and of the lamb would be as natural for Livy as it was for the writer of the Apocalypse. But the old Pagan world, like the pre-Christian Jewish world, could never say of this element of gentleness, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory"; the kingdom, the power, and the glory were not for it. The part of man's nature reserved for them was the self-asserting part. No nation that I know had a lamb as a symbol of its greatness. The Roman would have understood an eagle on the throne, for his ideal was the soaring of ambition. The Jew would have understood a lion on the throne, for his Messiah was a physical conqueror. But the lamb was ever a victim, the symbol of the vanquished, the sign of the dependent soul. Its place was not the throne, but the altar; it could never be the emblem of dominion. It suggests to us that even in our days we have a strong view of Christ's exaltation. What is our view of Christ's exaltation? It is that He has vanquished His Cross, ceased to be a servant, and become once more a king. St. John says it is the Cross itself which has been exalted, it is the Servant Himself who has been ennobled. No one will deny that at the present hour Christ occupies a different position in the world from that which He held in the first century of our era. He has passed from the foot to the head of the social ladder; He has become the name that is above every name. This will be admitted by all classes—believing and unbelieving. What is the cause of this transformation? It is that Christianity exerts more physical power over the world in our days than it did in the days of St. John? Assuredly not. In point of fact it does not exert more physical power. There are laws in every Christian land as to the regulation of Christian worship, but no individual man is compelled to worship. Why then is it that, in some sense, men of every creed and of no creed bow down before the name of Jesus? It is because the thing which the old world disparaged is the thing which the new world prizes. We are living after the resurrection; but let us never forget that it is the resurrection of the Crucified. The Christ who has risen from the grave is not a Christ who has triumphed over suffering; it is a Christ in whom suffering has triumphed. And let us begin by asking what was that kingdom which the seer of Patmos had in his mind when he claimed for Christ the throne of universal dominion. If the empire to be conquered be a physical one, it is not a lamb that will do it. No man who looked for a physical conquest could for a moment have conceived the simile of a world held in restraint by the power of a sacrificial life. But suppose now we test the logic of St. John's words by another empire. For there is another empire—a kingdom more unruly than the physical, more hard to subdue and more difficult to keep; it is the dominion of the human heart. The kingdom to be conquered, then, is the heart; we may consider this as settled. The next question is, How is the conquest to be made? Now, at the time when St. John wrote there had already been three attempts to deal with the problem of the heart. They may be described under the names Stoicism, Buddhism, and Judaism. Stoicism proposed to quell the passions of the heart by plucking out the heart altogether; it sought to get rid of temptation by getting rid of feeling. Buddhism proposed to

quell the passions of the heart by teaching that the heart itself was a delusion, that every pursuit of human desire ended in the discovery that the object was a shadow. Judaism proposed to quell the passions of the heart by the restraining hand of fear; it proclaimed the presence of a lawgiver; it set up an embankment against the flood; it kept the tree of life by the cherubim and the flaming sword. Now, to these three methods there is one thing in common—they all achieve their end by contracting the object of their search. Their aim is to conquer a certain tract of country; they do conquer it, but they reduce it to the ashes in the process. Can any of these systems be said to possess the throne of the heart? It is a conquest without a kingdom, a victory without a prize, a triumph that has been only purchased by the mutilation of what was made to be beautiful. Now, this is not the conquest which any man desires. Even in the physical sphere, what a potentate seeks is an extended, not a contracted possession. In the sphere of the heart it is the same. The reason why we object to lawless passion in the soul is that it contracts the soul. We do not want to cure either by plucking, withering, or stunting the flower; we wish to expand it. We wish to cure lawless passion on the homœopathic principle—by creating passion on the other side. It is more life and fuller that we want. You want a counter-passion, an opposing attraction, a positive stimulus pushing the other way. The desire of the flesh can only be met by the desire of the spirit—the thing called love. Now, remember that to St. John light is ever the analogue of love. He applies the two names as synonymous descriptions of God. And why? Because to his mind there was an identity between the process of the redemption of the flower by light and the redemption of the heart by love. The light conquers the flower. It conquers, not by contracting, but by expanding the flower. But there is one other thing which must be added to this; it conquers by dying for the flower; ere it can bring out the bloom it must itself be slain. For, what is the process by which the flower is kindled? It is an act of death on the part of the kindling substance. So far from waiting till it grows, it must itself be the principle of its growth. It must go down to it in the dark and in the cold, must take part in its darkness and its coldness. If it reaps the glory of its resurrection, it is because it shares the ignominy of its grave. It sits upon the throne by reason of its sacrifice. Such is the thought which St. John sees in light and transfers to love. He sees Christ sitting on the throne of human hearts—King, by the most infallible mode of conquest, and by a conquest that enhances the value of the possession. (*George Matheson, D.D.*) *The atonement*:—The mere crucifixion of any slave has in it that which would excite compassion; but this event has no parallel in the history of the world; never was a death like the death of Jesus. 1. As we look at this Lamb of God, let us mark the direful malignity of sin. 2. But we see in the Lamb slain, not only the work of sin, but the work of love. Review the whole history of this Lamb of God, and as we feel that He crowned all this love by dying in our stead, that we might have life, let us ask ourselves what return of love ought we to make to Him who loved us even unto death (Rom. xii. 1). (*Bp. Stevens.*) *Having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits.*—*Union with Christ by the Spirit*:—The mystical scene before us is the appearance of the Lord, once crucified, once sacrificed, and now the Conqueror, in the heavenly sanctuary; at, and then upon, the heavenly throne. It is the ascension, it is the triumph of the Lord ascended, shown to us in sign and symbol, from the point of view of heaven. It is a new fact, a new phenomenon, in the holy region. The Lord of propitiation, of redemption, is seen here as the immediate fountain-head for earth, the sacred point of radiation downward, of the sevenfold Spirit. To the Spirit, I venture to believe, refer not only the seven mystical eyes but the seven horns, the symbol of perfect spiritual power. I wish to speak of our union by the Holy Spirit with our exalted Lord; of the life of the true members in their Head through the Divine Lifegiver, that Head being the Lamb that was slain. Now, the union of Christ with His people and of them with Him is a truth which may be described, in the light of the New Testament, as not only a great truth of spiritual life, but the truth of truths. It is related to all other kindred doctrines as that which combines, harmonises, and explains them. It appears as the end where they appear as means. Hither they gather and converge. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. That word, "the Spirit of Christ," reminds us of Him who is the earthward eyes, who is, as it were, the effluent presence for His Church below, of the exalted Lamb. The Paraclete comes, and behold He mediates and makes for the Christian's soul and self a presence of the Lord which somehow is

better, far better, for the Christian in this his pilgrimage and tabernacle than even the joy and glory, if it were granted, of His Saviour's corporeal proximity. It is "in the Spirit" that the saint, that is to say the genuine Christian here below, "has access" in Christ unto the Father. It is those who are "led by the Spirit" who "are" in truth and deed, not in a certain sense, but in reality and nature, "the sons of God" in His Son. It is "by the Spirit" that they "mortify," they continuously do to death, "the deeds of the body," in the power and name of Christ. It is "by the Spirit" that they "walk" in Christ. It is "because of the Spirit dwelling in them," a truth full of deep significance as to the nature of the body of the resurrection, that "their mortal body shall be quickened" in the day when their Lord from heaven shall change it into likeness to His own. Of that harvest the indwelling Spirit is the first-fruits. Of that inheritance He is the earnest. So the sevenfold One is sent forth into all the earth, as the eyes, as the presence, of the exalted Lamb of the blessed Sacrifice. It is by Him, and by Him alone, that that presence is in the Church and is in the Christian. "Sent forth into all the earth": from the presence of the blessed, from the heaven of heavens, into all the earth; from the heart of God to the heart of man; from amidst the song of the heavenly elders to you and to me, to the concrete circumstances of our life to-day, to the stones and dust and thorns and pollutions in our path, to the snares and the illusions, to the crowds and to the solitude, of earth. Yes, He is sent forth into the present, the visible, the temporal. He is intended, He intends Himself, to be no dreamy abstraction above our heads and hearts, but to be the inmost Friend, the living strength, the infinitely ready and versatile resource and expedient, of the hour of your temptation and of mine. Over the real "deeds of our body," He is able to give victory. Our tremendously real "infirmities," He is here and now able to subvert, to "help," to transfigure into strength, as to us who look for Him He "makes perfect in our weakness" the strength of the Lamb who has overcome. He is able so to undertake our feeble, our erring steps, that we shall "walk by the Spirit," and, in a blessed reality of deliverance, "not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," yea, in all the range of the meaning of that phrase. He is able, and indeed He is willing, here and now, to take and show to us the things of that Christ of whom He is the eyes and presence here below. He is able to make all the flying days and hours of inestimable and never-returning time sacred to us, and yet to take out of them all anxiety; to fill the heart with the things eternal and yet to open to it as no other touch can do all that is truly rich and beautiful in the things of this life. He is able, in a word, having united us to Christ, to make that union "a living, bright reality, a possession" that we use as well as have, in the whole of life. "All these things worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." And, meanwhile, He worketh thus as the eyes, as the presence, of the Lamb. All is drawn from, all is related to, Christ, still Christ, Christ glorified, Christ crucified. Ah, be that in its turn recorded and remembered. Of whom is this Holy One the presence? Whose life, and love, and peace, and power does He convey and mediate to the heart and life He has Himself regenerated, breathing where He listeth, but so breathing that "thou hearest the sound" of the heavenly wind in the being that He vivifies? It is not a merely abstract Christ, if I may use the phrase. It is not merely archetypal goodness, righteousness, truth and beauty. It is the Lamb that was slain. It is the propitiation. It is the sinner's Prince of peace. (*H. C. G. Moule, M.A.*)

The seven eyes of the slain Lamb:—The eye seems a singular symbol for the Spirit, but it may be used as suggesting the swiftest and subtlest way in which the influences of a human spirit pass out into the external universe. The teaching of this emblem, then, is: "He, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received the promise of the Father, sheds forth this." The whole fulness of spiritual Divine power is in the hand of Christ to impart to the world. 1. THE "SLAIN LAMB" IS THE LORD AND GIVER OF THE SPIRIT. He "hath the seven spirits of God." Whatsoever there is, in Deity, of spirit and power; whatsoever of swift flashing energy; whatsoever of gentleness and grace; whatsoever of holiness and splendour; all inheres in the Man Christ Jesus; unto whom even in His earthly lowliness and humiliation, the Spirit was not given by measure, but unto whom in the loftiness of His heavenly life that Spirit is given in yet more wondrous fashion than in His humiliation. But it is not as the recipient, but as the bestower of the Spirit, that He comes before us in the great words of my text. All that He has of God He has that He may give. Whatsoever is His is ours; we share in His fulness and we possess His grace. II. Look at the representation here given of

THE INFINITE VARIETY OF GIFTS WHICH CHRIST BESTOWS. The number "seven," of course, at once suggests the idea of perfection and completeness. So that the thought emerges of the endless, boundless manifoldness and wonderful diversity of the operations of this great life-spirit that streams from Jesus Christ. Think of the number of designations by which that Spirit is described in the New Testament. In regard to all that belongs to intellectual life, He is "the Spirit of wisdom" and of "illumination in the knowledge of Christ," He is "the Spirit of truth." In regard to all that belongs to the spiritual life, "He is the Spirit of holiness," the "Spirit of liberty"; the Spirit of self-control, or, as rendered in our Bible, "of a sound mind"; the "Spirit of love." In regard to all that belongs to the practical life, "He is the Spirit of counsel and of might"; the "Spirit of power." In regard to all that belongs to the religious life, "He is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba! Father!" the "Spirit of grace and of supplication"; the "Spirit of life." So, over the whole round of man's capacity and nature, all his intellectual, moral, practical and religious being, there are gifts which fit each side and each part of it. Whatsoever a man needs, that he will find in the infinite variety of the spiritual help and strength which the Lamb slain is ready to give. It is like the old fable of the manna, which the Rabbis tell us tasted upon each lip precisely what each man chose. So this nourishment from above becomes to every man what each man requires. Water will take the shape of any vessel into which you choose to pour it; the Spirit of God assumes the form that is imposed upon it by our weaknesses and needs. III. THE UNBROKEN CONTINUITY OF THE GIFTS which the slain Lamb has to give. The word "sent" might be rendered "being sent," expressive of a continual impartation. Ah! God's Spirit is not given once in a way and then stops. It is given, not by fits and starts. There are variations in our receptiveness; there are no variations in its steady efflux. Does the sun shine at different rates? Are its beams cut off sometimes, or poured out with less energy, or is it only the position of the earth that makes the difference between the summer and the winter, the day and the night, whilst the great central orb is raying out at the same rate all through the murky darkness, all through the frosty days? And so the gifts of Jesus Christ pour out from Him at a uniform continuous rate, with no breaks in the golden beams, with no pauses in the continual flow. IV. THE UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION OF THESE GIFTS. "Seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The words are a quotation from a remarkable prophecy in the book of Zechariah, which speaks about the "seven eyes of God," running "to and fro over all the earth." There are no limitations of these gifts to any one race or nation as there were in the old times, nor any limitations either to a democracy. "On My servants and on My handmaidens will I pour out of My Spirit." In olden days the mountain tops were touched with the rays, and all the lowly valleys lay deep in the shadow and the darkness. Now the risen sunshine pours down into the deepest clefts, and no heart so poor, no illiterate so ignorant but that it may receive the full sunshine of that Spirit. Every Christian man and woman is inspired, not to be a teacher of infallible truth, but inspired in the true and deep sense that in them dwells the Spirit of Jesus Christ. All of us, weak, sinful, as we are, ignorant and bewildered often, may possess that Divine life to live in our hearts. Only remember it is the slain Lamb that gives the Spirit. And unless we are looking to that Lamb, slain as our hope and confidence, we shall not receive it. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The sevenfold offices of the Holy Spirit:*—The seven operations of the Holy Ghost are—1. First as the Convincer of sin. There is a certain consciousness of sin which may be without the Holy Ghost. There is scarcely any man who is not aware that he has done many wrong things. But there are two things in that man's sense of sin which prevent its being real repentance. He does not view his sins as grieving God, still less as having crucified Christ. 2. Then the Holy Ghost will show that man the real and only ground of all pardon. He will show him that Christ has been to this world to this very end, to bear our sins. 3. Then comes the great, blessed office of the Holy Ghost, to be our Comforter. First He makes us so to accept God's mercy that we rest in our forgiveness. And when the Holy Ghost has given us this first and chief comfort, then He will continue to be our Comforter every day in all our other sorrows. Other comforters generally try to remove our sorrow by making us forget it, or by putting something in its place. The Holy Ghost does not do that. He finds the elements of His comfort in the sorrow. He turns it into joy. 4. Then the Holy Ghost is the Great Teacher. He teaches as none else can ever teach. And for this reason He has the mind of God. And when He comes into our mind, He makes that

mind to conform to the mind of God. 5. And He sanctifies. That is His great aim—to imbue us with Himself, to make us like God. In the Divine alchemy every metal turns to gold. A higher motive; a whole heart; a humble spirit; an untiring love; an inward communion of all thoughts—that changes, that purifies, that elevates. The old nature becomes gradually the new man, and God Himself sees us in Him; sees His own image, and He is satisfied. 6. From that time we carry within us wherever we go an inward light, a spring of joy, a voice which says so gently and yet so distinctly, “This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” 7. And, finally, in all these wonderful and living ways, the Holy Ghost puts a seal upon us. He impresses us in our inner and outer life, with that image of the superscription of God—that badge of our high calling. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Vers. 8-10. *Golden vials full of odours.*—*Golden vials full of odours*:—I. THE PRAYERS OF GOD’S PEOPLE ARE AS SWEET TO HIM AS INCENSE. 1. This is not due to any natural excellence or merit which they possess in and by themselves. Christ Jesus possesses such an abundance of precious merit that He puts fragrance into our supplications. I think it is Ambrose who uses a very pretty figure concerning believers’ prayers. He says we are like little children who run into the garden to gather flowers to please their father, but we are so ignorant and childish that we pluck as many weeds as flowers, and some of them very noxious, and we would carry this strange mixture in our hands, thinking that such base weeds would be acceptable to him. The mother meets the child at the door, and she says to it, “Little one, thou knowest not what thou hast gathered”; she unbinds this mixture and takes from it all the weeds and leaves only the sweet flowers, and then she takes other flowers sweeter than those which the child has plucked, and inserts them instead of the weeds, and then puts back the perfect posy into the child’s hand, and it runs therewith to its father. Jesus Christ in more than motherly tenderness thus deals with our supplications. 2. Note well, that true, acceptable intercession must be composed of the prayers of saints. “Golden goblets full of the prayers of saints.” Nothing is here said of the prayers of officials, hirelings, and functionaries. And who are the saints? They are men whom the Lord has made holy by the power of His Spirit, whose nature He has purified. Then, in the matter of intercession, one of the most important things is the character of the person. We must, by the Spirit’s power, maintain the saintly character; we must walk apart from worldliness and covetousness; we must put aside uncleanness, anger, wrath, and every evil thing, or else we shall not be able to present unto the Lord such sweet odours as His soul delighteth in. 3. Note next, that these prayers must be compounded of precious graces; for they are compared to incense, and, as you know, the incense used in the temple was made up of divers sweet spices, compounded “according to the work of the apothecary.” In prayer, that which is sweet to God is not the words used, though they ought to be appropriate; not anything perceptible to the outward senses, but in secret qualities, comparable to the essence and aroma of sweet spices. Let us bless God that the Holy Ghost is the believer’s apothecary. He helps each believer’s infirmities, and makes for us a mixture of all choice graces, so that when we pray our pleadings are accepted as sweet incense. II. BLENDED PRAYERS ARE PECULIARLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. “The prayers of saints.” The prayers of a saint are sweet, but the prayers of saints are sweeter. United prayers possess the power of harmony. In music there is melody in any one distinct note; but we have all recognised a peculiar charm in harmony. Now, the prayers of one saint are to God melody, but the intercessions of many are harmony, and to God there is much that is pleasing in the harmony of His people’s prayers. No two children of God pray exactly alike. There is a difference of tone. If taught of God each one will pray graciously, but there will be in one prayer what there is not in another. If all the fruits of the garden be luscious, yet each one has its own special flavour. All the bells may be of silver, and yet each one will have its own tone. Now, if these varying tones are melted into one, what masterly harmony they make! Therefore, the Lord promises great things when two of us agree as touching anything concerning His kingdom. III. And now, lastly, LET US BLEND OUR PRAYERS, however faulty and feeble they may be, with the general supplications of the period. If united prayer be sweet to God, oh, let us give Him much of it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The perfume of prayer*:—There is an exquisite beauty in this thought that true prayer is fragrance to God. The pleadings and supplications of His people on the earth rise from lowly homes, from sick rooms,

from darkened chambers of grief where loved ones kneel beside their dead, from humble sanctuaries, from stately cathedrals, and are wafted up before God as the breath of flowers is wafted to us in summer days sweet fields and fragrant gardens. And God "smells a sweet savour." Prayer is perfume to Him. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) They sung a new song.—*The heavenly singers and their song*:—I.

First, BEHOLD THE WORSHIPPERS; for, remember, that we must be like them if we are to be with them. It is a well-known rule that heaven must be in us before we can be in heaven. 1. The first point about the worshippers is this, they are all full of life. I should not like to dogmatise upon the meaning of the four living creatures; but still they do seem to me to be an emblem of the Church in its Godward standing, quickened by the life of God. At any rate, they are living creatures; and the elders themselves are living personages. Yet alas, that it should be needful to say so trite a thing; but the dead cannot praise God! "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." Yet how many dead people there are in this great assembly to-night! Those in heaven are all full of life; there is no dead worshipper there, no dull, cold heart that does not respond to the praise by which it is surrounded; they are all full of life. 2. And further note, that they are all of one mind. Whether they are four-and-twenty elders, or four living creatures, they all move simultaneously. With perfect unanimity they fall on their faces, or touch their harps, or uplift their golden vials full of sweet odours. I like unanimity in worship here. 3. Note, next, that as the heavenly worshippers are full of life, and full of unity, so they are all full of holy reverence. In heaven, they fall down before the Lamb; should not we serve God better if we did more of this falling down to worship the Lamb? 4. Note, next, that while they are all full of reverence, they are all in a praising condition: "Having every one of them harps." They did not pass one harp round, and take turns in playing it; nor was there one who had to sit still because he had forgotten his harp; but they had, every one of them, his harp. I am afraid those words do not describe all God's people here to-night. Where is your harp? It is gone to be repaired, is it not? Where is your harp? You have left it on the willow-tree, by the waters of Babylon, so you have not one here. 5. They are all ready for prayer.

Are they not crying, "O Lord, how long"? Why should they not pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? They would understand that prayer better than we do. We know how God's will is not done on earth, but they know how it is done in heaven. Well, they, all of them, had "golden vials full of odours." Are we always furnished and prepared for prayer? II. Now, having thus spoken of the worshippers, I want you to HEARKEN TO THEIR SONGS. 1. It is rather an unusual thing to take a hymn and treat it doctrinally; but, for your instruction, I must take away the poetry for a moment, and just deal with the doctrines of this heavenly hymn. The first doctrine is, Christ is put in the front, the Deity of Christ, as I hold. They sing, "Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy." Next, the doctrine of this hymn is that the whole Church delights in the mediation of Christ. Notice, it was when He had taken the book that they said, "Thou art worthy to take the book." To have Christ standing between God and man is the joy of every believing heart. But now, notice, in the Church's song, what is her reason for believing that Christ is worthy to be a Mediator. She says, "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain." We rejoice in our Mediator because He died. Well then, notice that they sing of the redemption which His death effected, and they do not sing of the redemption of the world. No, not at all: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." So much about the heavenly hymn doctrinally. 2. Now about it experimentally: "Thou hast redeemed us to God." I have said that you cannot sing this song unless you know something of it now. Have you been redeemed? Has the embargo that was on you through sin been taken off you? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? For every man who believeth in Jesus Christ has the evidence of his eternal redemption. That was their experience: "Thou hast redeemed us." They felt free; they remembered when they wore their fetters, but they saw them all broken by Christ. Have you been set free? 3. Thus have I spoken of the song doctrinally and experimentally: now let me speak of it expectantly. There is something to be expected: "And we shall reign on the earth."

(*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The singing legions of God*:—Evidently more is made of music in heaven than we are wont to make of it here on earth. 1. There was first the believers' song. Its theme was redemption, the salvation of the soul through the blood of the Lamb. So its singers were the ransomed. (1) This song was "new"

necessarily, for the theme was absolutely fresh in celestial history. There had been sin in heaven, and there had been justice wrought on those who had sinned. Some of the angels had fallen from their high estate. No atonement was ever made or offered in their behalf. Here was therefore a subject never before celebrated in the songs of God's house. It was exclusive also, for only those who knew what it meant could sing it with the spirit and the understanding. Emphasis must be laid upon the expressions of personal acknowledgment. "Thou hast redeemed us"; "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests." The experience of each child of God is individual. Reminiscence is a part of his duty, and it always leads to gratitude, and starts a new song. (2) It was a great song. For the multitude of singers was simply innumerable. So the sound rose "like mighty thunderings, and the voice of many waters." (3) It was likewise a royal song. The redeemed do not say "we shall reign," but "we are reigning." Christians are the regal and the regnant race in the world now. 2. Next came the song of the angels. The theme of this was the character and rank of Jesus Christ. Observe the vast numbers of the singers, and the stress they put on their strain with a "loud voice": "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels," &c. Observe the vast ascription of honours to Christ: Saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb," &c. This seems to include everything that mind can conceive of supreme ownership and control. They lay the universe down at His feet. Observe the special reason they suggest for their surrender. It is as "the Lamb that was slain" that they exalt Him to the eminence. These angels had no part in the atonement, but they knew just where Christ's greatest exploits had been done. They had for ages "desired earnestly to look into" this mystery of His humiliation; now they understood what it meant. 3. Then the choir of creatures begins the anthem assigned to them; and now the theme is the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 13). Just notice the very singular voices employed in this choir. Birds and beasts, and worms and fishes—oh, wonder! how will such creatures be able to sing together? God is to listen, and He will understand them and be satisfied. God hears and loves what does not ever reach us; our silences may be full of singing to Him. 4. Now we reach the grand chorus with which the singing concluded. Led by representatives, whose mysterious nature and office we cannot altogether explain, it would seem as if the whole three choirs burst forth into one final ascription: "And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The new song*:—I. A NEW song. If a new tune be started in church there is only here and there a person that can sing it. It is some time before the congregation learn a new tune. But not so with the new song of heaven. II. A COMMEMORATIVE song. We are distinctly told that it makes reference to past deliverances. Oh! how much they have to sing about. III. It will be an ACCOMPANIED song. I love the cymbals, for Israel clapped them in triumph at the Red Sea. I love the harp, for David struck it in praising the Lord. I love all stringed instruments and organs, for God demands that we shall praise Him on stringed instruments and organs. There is, in such music, much to suggest the higher worship. IV. An ANTICIPATIVE song. Why heaven has hardly begun yet. All the world is yet to be saved. After that there may be other worlds to conquer. Mightier song as other garlands are set on the brow of Jesus. Mightier song as Christ's glories unfold. I stayed a week at Niagara Falls, hoping thoroughly to understand and appreciate it. But, on the last day, they seemed newer and more incomprehensible than on the first day. Gazing on the infinite rush of celestial splendours, where the oceans of delight meet, how soon will we exhaust the song? Never! never! V. An UNANIMOUS song. There will, no doubt, be some to lead, but all will be expected to join. It will be grand congregational singing. All the sweet voices of the redeemed. Grand music will it be when that new song arises. God grant that at last we may all sing it. But if we do not sing the praise of Christ on earth, we will never sing it in heaven. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The worship of heaven*:—I. It is JUBILANT. "They sang." Singing is the natural language of joy. The worship of heaven is not mechanical, not irksome. It is the outbreathing of the soul into rapture, of gratitude, admiration, reverence and love. II. It is FRESH. "A new song." There is nothing monotonous in heaven. Souls have an instinctive craving for variety, and the Creator has amply provided for this instinct. In the life of souls in heaven, there is something fresh every hour—fresh sceneries, fresh occurrences, fresh engagements, fresh connections, fresh thoughts; it is a "new song." Heaven is ever fresh. (*Homilist.*) *The perfect song*:—Love and joy are said to make a musician. How few become

proficients here; but in heaven every one will be perfect. (*W. Wayte Andrew.*) **Thou art worthy to take the book.**—*Jesus, the delight of heaven:*—I. The bright ones before the throne adore the Lord Jesus as WORTHY OF THE HIGH OFFICE OF MEDIATOR. They put in no claim for worthiness, but by their silence, and their subsequent song when Christ came forward, they admitted that He alone could unfold the purposes of God and interpret them to the sons of men. Notice carefully to what they ascribe this worthiness—"Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain." As mediator our Lord's worthiness did not merely arise from His person as God and perfect man: this fitted Him to undertake the office, but His right to claim the privileges written in the Magna Charta which God held in His hand, His right to take possession for His people of that seven-sealed indenture lies in this, that He has fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and hence they sing, "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain." II. In heaven they adore the Lord as their REDEEMER. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." The metaphor of redemption, if I understand it, signifies this. A thing which is redeemed in the strict sense belonged beforehand to the person who redeemed it. Under the Jewish law lands were mortgaged as they are now; and when the money lent upon them, or the service due for them, was paid, the land was said to be redeemed. An inheritance first belonged to a person, and then went away from him by stress of poverty, but if a certain price was paid it came back. Now "all souls are Mine" saith the Lord, and the souls of men belong to God. The metaphor is used—and, mark, these expressions are but metaphors—but the sense under them is no metaphor; it is fact. We come back to God again, to whom we always and ever did belong, because Jesus has redeemed us unto God by His blood. And notice that the redemption they sing about in heaven is not general redemption. It is particular redemption. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Oh, may we have a share in this particular, efficient redemption, for this alone can bring us where they sing the new song. III. In heaven they praise Christ as the DONOR OF THEIR DIGNITIES. They are kings and reign. We too are kings; but as yet we are not known or recognised, and often we ourselves forget our high descent. Up there they are crowned monarchs, but they say, "Thou hast made us kings." They are priests too, as we are now, every one of us. The priesthood of God's saints, the priesthood of holiness, which offers prayer and praise to God—this they have in heaven; but they say of it, "Thou hast made us priests." What the saints are, and what they are to be, they ascribe to Jesus. They have no glory but what they received from Him, and they know it, and are perpetually confessing it. IV. They in heaven adore the Saviour as DIVINE. Depend upon it, you never will go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God. They are all doing it there: you will have to come to it, and if you entertain the notion that He is a mere man, or that He is anything less than God, I am afraid you will have to begin at the beginning and learn what true religion means. You have a poor foundation to rest upon. I could not trust my soul with a mere man, or believe in an atonement made by a mere man: I must see God Himself putting His hand to so gigantic a work. I cannot imagine a mere man being thus praised as the Lamb is praised. Jesus is "God over all, blessed for ever." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.**—*The song of redemption:*—I. WHAT THE HEAVENLY SINGERS THINK OF THEIR REDEEMER, OR WHOM THEY TAKE HIM TO BE. The very words, "Thou," "He," "Him," imply that their Redeemer is a person—a living being—who has willed their good, and to whom grateful acknowledgments are due. But whom do these saints take their Redeemer to be? They call Him "Lord" and they call him "Lamb." They would not call Jesus "Lord," especially in the presence of the Eternal Throne, and in the very same breath with which they say, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come," if they were not assured that He still thinks it is no robbery to be equal with God. They would not call Jesus "Lamb" if they did not recognise in Him that true human nature which He wore on earth, when John called Him "the Lamb of God," and in which He made Himself an offering for sin. II. HOW THIS SONG DESCRIBES THE MANNER AND THE NATURE OF REDEMPTION. "Thou wast slain." Death is a very common thing in this world's history. Nor is it even an uncommon thing to be slain! In this wicked world life has been the frequent victim of violence. There is nothing, then, in the purity of Christ's character to make it surprising that "He was slain." But numerous as have been the martyrdoms of the world, and honoured and blessed as are the martyrs before God, there is only

one of them whose honours are celebrated in heaven. And He is Jesus Christ. There must be something peculiar in His martyrdom, something to single it out from every other. The next note of the song reveals the peculiarity of the death of Christ—"Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood." If Christ has ten thousand fellow martyrs, He has not one fellow redeemer. He gave His life a ransom for many, and by that ransom the many are redeemed. The words of the song of redemption, while they distinguish the death of Christ from every other, teach us the true nature of the redemption of which the gospel tells us. It is a redemption by blood, and of consequence we know that it must be a redemption from guilt. The poet and the sentimentalist may dream of a redemption of which he has some vague sense of need, but which he does not understand; the gospel believer rejoices in a redemption which is felt by him a simple reality, and in virtue of which he stands pardoned and sanctified before his Maker.

III. CONSIDER THE PERFECTED FRUITS OF REDEMPTION AS CELEBRATED IN THIS SONG OF HEAVEN. 1. "Thou hast redeemed us to God." There is something remarkably instructive in this little phrase—"to God." They were lost to God—His creatures, but, in the strictest sense of the terms, "unprofitable servants," "cumberers of His ground." Again, they were enemies to God. And in that position they were separated from God, both by their own enmity and by the legal liabilities of their guilt. They had wandered from their centre, and, consequently, out of their orbit, they were wandering in darkness; the moral world within them was reduced to disorder, chaos, and death. But now restored, the light of God shines full upon them, and order, beauty, and life again adorn and animate the soul. Redeemed to God, they are redeemed into a state of nearness to Him whose infinite fullness supplies a universe with good, and are the objects of His love whose favour is life, whose loving-kindness is better than life. 2. They have been made kings unto God. That is, they have been exalted to a state of royal, or more than royal honour. They may have been slaves on earth, they are kings in heaven. 3. And, as their song intimates, they are priests likewise. They realise in its fullest import the prayer of David (Psa. xxvii. 4). Not some, but all the redeemed are priests unto God. Such are the perfected fruits of redemption.

IV. CONSIDER THE PRAISE WHICH IS OFFERED TO CHRIST ON THE GROUND OF THE REDEMPTION WHICH HE HAS WROUGHT. The very angels, with voices whose number is ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, say "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," &c. It is not the redeemed alone that say this—there can be no suspicion that grateful emotion exaggerates the benefit, or is too lavish of its praise. They that needed no redemption sing the praise of the Redeemer as well as those who were redeemed by His blood. There is no high quality manifested in the works of creation and providence which does not shine forth more illustriously in the work of redemption. Do you speak of power? It is here in all its irresistible might, as well as there, though in other forms. Do you speak of wisdom as manifested in the reation and government of the world? In the work of redemption you have the perfection of wisdom (Rom. xi. 33). Do you speak of holiness and righteousness? The song of creation and the song of providence will both embrace these attributes in tones of varied praise. But the song of redemption will speak of them with a fullness and emphasis all its own. Both Sinai and Calvary will be summoned to bear witness that God is a holy and righteous God. In conclusion, the very idea of a song of redemption involves in it two great lessons. 1. It teaches us that we need redemption. 2. You are taught by this song of heaven that you are worth redeeming. Christ adjudges every one of them of more value than a world. (*John Kennedy, M.A.*) *The death of Christ an inexhaustible theme of wonder and praise to the Church.*—1. Who He was that was slain. 2. This memorable decease was no casual event. The true spring, both of His death and of that eternal purpose by which it was foreordained, was no other than the free, unmerited, and sovereign love of a three-one God to sinners. 3. According to all the principles that are capable of influencing human nature, the highest evidence of love that can be given is "for a man to lay down his life for his friend" (John xv. 13; Rom. v. 7). But they for whom Christ died were neither righteous nor good. 4. Our matter of praise and wonder is still increased when we consider how Christ died. (1) As to what He suffered, it was not simply death such as ordinary persons undergo. He may be said to have begun to die as soon as He was born. And He died ten thousand deaths in one. (2) If we take a view of the manner in which He suffered all this, it was not less wonderful. Though His sufferings were thus severe, He was far from repining or murmuring under them. 5. We have additional matter, both for praise and wonder, when we consider what great designs He had in view, and actually

accomplished by being slain. (1) He appeased the justice of God and made way for our restoration to His favour. (2) He "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross." (3) He broke down "the middle wall of partition" that was betwixt Jew and Gentiles, and so made way for the introduction of the posterity of Japheth, to "dwell in the tents of Shem." (4) He overcame all our spiritual enemies who held us in bondage and stood in the way of our enjoying the benefit of that redemption which He purchased for us. 6. We have matter of the highest praise, as well as of the deepest wonder, when we consider that though Christ was once slain, He is now alive, and is "set down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." LESSONS: 1. The people of God have a ready answer to all the charges that the law of God brings against them, and to all the accusations of conscience; for Christ was slain. 2. There is no want of spiritual provision in God's house for any sinner that is willing to make use of it. 3. Here is a strong incitement to the duty of mortification. 4. We see here a plain and patent way, yea, a new and living way, opened and consecrated for us, into the presence of God, through the veil of the flesh of a slain Redeemer. 5. There is good reason why all who profess to be Christians should submit with cheerfulness to the government of Christ as King of Zion. 6. The disciples of Christ need never be at a loss for a subject of sweet meditation by themselves, nor for a subject of sweet counsel, as they go to the house of God in companies. 7. Here is a broad and sure foundation for the faith of every hearer of the gospel, of whatever character or condition he be. The Lamb of God was slain, and, through His death, eternal life is freely offered. (*John Young, D.D.*) *The song of redemption*:—I. THE NEED OF REDEMPTION. 1. It is proved by the conduct of the species; by the various modes of expiation to which men of all ages and nations have had recourse. 2. It finds an evidence in the breast of every individual. II. THE SUFFICIENCY OF REDEMPTION BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. 1. The victim was provided by Jehovah Himself. Infinite goodness and love had nothing more to give. 2. Nor should it ever be forgotten that the vicarious suffering was endured to its full extent—to blood and to death! 3. We may rely on the competency and perfection of redemption by the blood of Christ, inasmuch as its success has already appeared in the actual salvation of so many of Adam's race. III. THE TRUTH OF MAN'S REDEMPTION BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. 1. One objection advanced by the enemies of the atonement of Christ is, "that repentance and amendment constitute of themselves an acceptable and adequate means of reconciliation with God." Confidently as this maxim is advanced, we do not see that it takes place in the governments and legal institutions of men. 2. Another of the most plausible of those objections adduced against the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ is "that we can perceive no reason for, or connection between, the shedding of that blood and the acceptance and salvation of men." But is the statement in this objection true? Might we not say that when the Son of God became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, an act of obedience so stupendous became a reason or consideration not only why God should highly exalt Him and give Him a name above every name, but also why He should forgive and accept all who repent and believe in Him? IV. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE of this momentous doctrine. 1. It is eminently qualified to impress us with holy fear. 2. It should inspire us with the fullest confidence. 3. It should compel our gratitude and praise. (*Jas. Bromley.*) *The Lamb slain worshipped in heaven*:—The death of Christ for the redemption of sinners constitutes the distinguishing peculiarity of His work and the high ground for His adoration. 1. Like the chapter before us, the Scriptures everywhere teach us to regard the death of Christ in a peculiar manner. While the Scriptures have recorded the history of His birth, of His life, of His sufferings and conversation, they have manifestly done this only in explanation of His character and to give us a just view of His amazing condescension; and all these things they concentrate to one point, as they gather them all around the crowning matter of the whole—His amazing death! He became incarnate that He might be able to die. 2. The manner in which He met death was peculiar. He met it as no living man could have expected; as no righteous man that we know of ever did. How would you expect Christ to die, who lived without sin, if a life of holiness was His main work here, and if He had no more of difficulty to encounter with the king of terrors than falls to the lot of the righteous? He had more. And hence He quailed at the prospect. Willing to die, ready, He still trembles; in agony He prays, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." 3. The sacred Scriptures uniformly speak of this death in a manner,

totally different from that in which they mention the death of any other being. Isaiah, Abel, Zecharias, Stephen, Peter, James, Paul—not one of the whole army is spoken of as making atonement for sin or any procurement of eternal life. But, on the contrary, the death of Christ is uniformly mentioned as having such an intention and such a result. 4. On the ground of this death the Scriptures found the argument for even the common morality of life. 5. The holy Scriptures uniformly expect to affect us most, and to furnish us the highest lessons of holiness, by affecting our hearts with the contemplation of the death of Christ. They want faith to fix there. Christ loved me and gave Himself a ransom. They expect to furnish an antidote to the love of sin by leading us to faith in Him who died to expiate it. 6. This death of Christ is an incomparable manifestation of Divine love, and hence is calculated to have an unequalled moral influence. All else must yield to it. Conclusion: 1. This is the adoration of heaven. Hearts on earth ought to assort with hearts in heaven over every contemplation of the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. 2. As love constitutes the mode in which God seeks to save us, and at the same time constitutes the highest manifestation of His unfathomable perfections, the religion, whereby we hope to be at peace with Him, must very much consist in the same kind of affection. Open your heart to God, just where God opens His heart to you. Consent to love Him as His child. 3. There is no occasion for that gloomy despondency which sometimes feels that it may not confide in Christ, because it has nothing but a heart to offer. Christ wants nothing but your heart. 4. You need not fear to worship Christ. He is worshipped in heaven. 5. Finally, what unequalled humility and penitence become us at the communion-table! (*I. S. Spencer, D.D.*)

The Redeemer's sufferings:—I. THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS IS CONSTANTLY KEPT UP BY THE BLESSED INHABITANTS OF HEAVEN. II. WITH WHAT PECULIAR ADVANTAGES DO THE WORSHIPPERS ABOVE PURSUE THEIR RESEARCHES INTO THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. 1. The inhabitants of heaven enjoy an undisturbed leisure. 2. They possess perfect, inward rectitude and vigour. No irregularity of thought, no languishing of affection, can invade them. 3. They are wonderfully illuminated in the knowledge of those Divine truths, which are supposed in the gospel mystery, and on which it is built. 4. They have the fulness of evangelical illumination. 5. The presence of the Lamb, or of the Mediator in His human nature, in the midst of them. 6. The presence and experience of the glorious fruits of His death. III. THE HAPPY AND PRECIOUS EFFECTS WHICH CONSTANTLY ATTEND THOSE PERFECT VIEWS OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS, IN THE MINDS OF SAINTS AND ANGELS. 1. Their views of these wonderful sufferings are the chief means of their beatific vision of God. 2. While the blessed thus look upon the Three-One God, they love Him with an increasing, and most joyful and pure love. They rest, delight, and rejoice in God with ineffable pleasure. 3. While they thus love God supremely, they are knit together in the most endeared mutual affection to each other; each member of that vast assembly passionately loves the whole, and is beloved by all. 4. These inward feelings are attended with most perfect acts of worship to God, and expressions of kindness to each other. (*J. Love, D.D.*)

Redemption to God by blood:—These words show that, naturally, we are in a state of bondage, and under condemnation. We are enthralled by sin, from which we need to be redeemed by price and by power. Then the words call attention to the wonderful personage by whom we are redeemed. None but Emmanuel, the eternal Word Incarnate, was adequate to the work. Note another truth: That the theme of praise in heaven and on earth is one. Here the strain is learned: there it is consummated. I. Christ redeemed us to God, to be His property, His children, His freedmen; to live with Him and for Him. 1. We are redeemed to God for our own happiness; we are brought near to Him, united to Him, made like to Him. In God's favour is life: His lovingkindness is better than life. How shall guilty sinners obtain peace with God? By washing in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Our iniquity is forgiven, our sin is covered. Again, the Redeemer brings us into the family of God. Adoption is bestowed on us as an act of free grace for His sake. The prodigal sons are welcomed back to the plenty and endearments of their Father's house. We have boldness to enter into His presence by the blood of Jesus. But further, besides reinstating us in the favour and family of God, Christ restores within us His image. Our eyes are opened that we may see Him, and our hearts renewed to love His holiness. Once more, we were brought to the enjoyment of God. Being freely justified, we have a right to be happy; and amidst the tears which bereavements cause, and the anxieties which arise from blighted harvests and empty stalls; when health fails, and friends forsake, and life is a-departing, may

we not joy in the God of our salvation? 2. Let us view our redemption to God as it respects His glory. For example, God's power is magnified. For the Son to bear the sins of an apostate world is more than to poise the earth upon nothing, and stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He bruised Satan's head, magnified the law, punished sin, and saved sinners. Divine holiness, likewise, and justice and truth, are glorified. How marvellously were all the promises and all the threatenings accomplished! And rather than one jot or tittle should fall to the ground, the sword was awaked against Jehovah's Fellow! Comparable with this, where is there an evidence of truth and righteousness? We are redeemed, also, to the glory of God's wisdom. Finally, what shall be said of the mercy and the love which shine, as they nowhere else shine, in redemption? II. The text tells us of **THE PRICE** by which Christ redeems us to God, not by the simple fiat of power, or by the bare exercise of mercy, nor by any compromise or unworthy concession, nor with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with His own precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Scripture uniformly testifies, that the ransom which the Son of Man paid was His own life. But it is very worthy of regard how frequently it is described by this name of *blood*. In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, you may see what a value was attached to blood under the Old Testament. Why is the Saviour's blood thus prominently, in both dispensations, pressed on our attention? One end which this mode of expression serves is to certify to us the reality of His death. We see His heart pierced, and the blood drawn off; and we know that the penalty has been borne, and our peace secured. I suggest two additional reasons for this interesting phraseology. 1. That we may be constantly reminded of the manner of His death. It was not natural, but effected by violence. It was not by hanging or suffocation; it was bloody. Conscious of innocence, of benevolence, of the greatest love to His enemies, the buffetings of His body were only emblems of the grievous wounds with which His soul was stabbed. 2. In order to affect us, to excite to penitence, gratitude and love. (*J. C. Herdman, M.A.*)

Hast made us unto our God kings and priests.—*The kingly priesthood of the saints*:—I. **THE REDEEMER'S DOINGS.** 1. He made us kings and priests, virtually, when He signed the covenant of grace. 2. But He did not stop there. It was not simply agreeing to the terms of the treaty; but in due time He filled it all—yes, to its utmost jot and tittle. 3. Christ finished the great work of making us what we are, by His ascension into heaven. If He had not risen up on high and “led captivity captive,” His death would have been insufficient. He “died for our sins,” but He “rose again for our justification.” II. **THE SAINTS' HONOURS.** 1. His royal office: a Christian is a king. He is not simply like a king, but he is a king, actually and truly. However, I shall try and show you how he is like a king. Remember his royal ancestry. Again, the saints, like monarchs, have a splendid retinue. Kings and monarchs cannot travel without a deal of state. If you had eyes to see, you would perceive a body-guard of angels always attending every one of the blood-bought family. Now, notice the insignia and regalia of the saints. Kings and princes have certain things that are theirs by perspective right. For instance, Her Majesty has her Buckingham Palace, and her other palaces, her crown royal, her sceptre, and so on. But, has a saint a palace? Yes. I have a palace! and its walls are not made of marble, but of gold. Have Christians a crown too? Oh, yes; but they do not wear it every day. They have a crown, but their coronation day is not yet arrived. They have been anointed monarchs. they have some of the authority and dignity of monarchs; but they are not crowned monarchs yet. Kings are considered the most honourable amongst men. They are always looked up to and respected. A monarch generally commands respect. Ah! we think that worldly princes are the most honourable of the earth; but if you were to ask God, He would reply, “My saints, in whom I delight, these are the honourable ones.” Lastly—1. Kings have dominion: and so have the saints. 2. Saints are not only kings but priests. We are priests because priests are Divinely chosen persons, and so are we. “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” But we have that calling and election; we were all ordained to it from the foundations of the world. Then next, we are priests, because we enjoy Divine honours. None but a priest might enter within the vail; there was a court of the priests into which none might ever go, except the called ones. Priests had certain rights and privileges which others had not. Saint of Jesus! heir of heaven! thou hast high and honourable privileges, which the world wots not of! Then another remark shall be, we have a Divine service to perform.

(C. H. Spurgeon.) *Kings by the grace of God* (with Prov. xvi. 32):—Wilberforce was once asked, who was the greatest man he had ever known. He replied, "Out of all comparison, Pitt, but I never think of his superiority without reflecting, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." So real, earnest, supremely noble, is a true Christian life. The best things in it are not those which dazzle by their glitter and their glare. It was an old heathen saying, "the wise alone are kings." Of those who have been made "wise unto salvation," it is infinitely more true that they alone are kings. They have been made kings unto God by Jesus Christ. From Christ's pierced hand we receive a royal sceptre to reign on earth. The song of the redeemed in heaven is descriptive of our dignity in this world, and our glory in the next, as "kings unto God." This royal honour, with the sovereign power it insures, we are slow to appropriate. It is a truism, perhaps, to say that to lead a healthy Christian life, we must live by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, seeking the accomplishment of right objects in a right spirit, subduing the world, the flesh, and the devil, in a way that men cannot do who live "after the law of a carnal commandment." We are under great temptations of living so that we may make money, and gain influence and power, and this to the almost total exclusion of the grander requirements of self governance. Christ has made us kings, and the first subject He gives us to rule is our own spirit. The man "who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." To rule our spirit, to get the ascendancy over ourselves, to be able, under all circumstances, to do the thing that ought to be done, not only in the right way, but under the influence of the right motives—this ought to be the life-long endeavour of every true Christian. No grander empire, no brighter crown can be won. The ruler of his spirit is the only real potentate. He who has no command of himself is "like a city broken down and without walls"—defenceless, open to the attack of every enemy, an object of reproach to every beholder. The man in such a plight is weak at the very place where he should be strong; and this weakness impels him to play the coward, when he ought to be valiant in the fight. He flees from himself and seeks company. He can live in turmoil, business, amusement, and enjoy his activities there; but he sadly lacks the courage to seek a solitude—to close and grapple with the enemy, the evil which he consciously knows and feels is gaining the tyranny over him. Hence it is that some of the earth's greatest heroes have been the basest moral cowards, because they have shirked self-discipline and self-control. "For a man to overcome himself is to overcome the world; for a man is a microcosm, a little world," So, when Epictetus was asked, "Who is free?" he replied, "He who masters himself"—with much the same tone of expression as Solomon, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." This leads to the inquiry, wherein lie the rebelliousness and disobedience of the spirit we are to rule? Our spirit is loosed from law by transgression. Our foes are those of our own household: sinful thoughts, carnal desires, unholy dispositions. These must be repressed, subjugated, conquered. We are to do battle with the inward corruptions and propensities of our degenerate nature. The town of Mansoul is like a besieged city, having within its citadel an enemy not unwilling to help the besieger; sometimes, indeed, really anxious to put into his hands an important battery or stronghold. Incessant watchfulness, untiring warfare is needed, until the traitor has been either expelled or crushed. Of all the faculties of the human soul we may affirm that they are good servants but bad masters. Every one of them must be ruled and regulated by right reason and God's pure counsel, so as to perform its proper work at the right time, and in the spirit of loving obedience to our Redeemer-King. Our judgment must not be overthrown by wild desire or vaulting ambition, yet covetousness is good, if I "covet earnestly the best gifts"; and ambition is good, if its object be to excel in all that is pure and lovely and of good report. The ambition that would wade remorselessly through slaughter to a throne, if directed to a worthy end, would become an enthusiasm for goodness and God, which could say of itself, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." Stiff-necked stubbornness and firm determination to have our own way are not evil in themselves. They are good, ennobling, and Christ-like, when with unflinching courage we seek through their action the God-like and the true. When, in doing our own will, we are doing God's will, there is only one road to go, and that is straightforward, without bend or divergence to the right hand or the left. It was thus that Christ, our Lord, was so self-possessed—so thoroughly master of Himself. It was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. And herein He left us an example. The gospel of Christ

does not propose to root out our desires, or even to repress them in any way. It proposes rather to purify, regenerate, and intensify them, only turning them away from what is selfish and mean to what is worthy and good. Christ has made us kings, not unto ourselves but unto our God; not for our own selfish ends, but for His glory and the good of men. Therefore, we are to get the governance of our spirits, to make them nobler and loftier, more Christ-like in character, more unselfish in aim. Of one of our English kings it was said that, "endowed with a great command over himself, he soon obtained an uncontrolled ascendancy over his people." This is the royal road to real power. Every one of us has his own battle to fight; the battlefields may vary, but the conquest in every case is to be for self-conquest, for rule of spirit, for the inheritance of the conqueror. The struggle, taxing and tasking all our energies, becomes through Christ a triumph. Made kings by Him, we are made more than conquerors *through* Him. Our very struggles for self-mastery become a possession, crowning us with a glory which apart from them we could never acquire, and we come to realise in our own experience that "he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." (*Wm. Leitch, B.A.*)

Royal prerogatives and royal giving:—I. POWER. His power is applied in three directions. 1. Selfward. One of the first blessings conferred by the gospel is self-control. Our kingship is not merely prospective. We are to live like kings. 2. Manward. The most Christian nations are to-day the most powerful. 3. Godward. By our relation to Christ we are raised to a rank where we may treat with heaven. The Christian has power with God. II. GREAT POSSESSIONS. Who would not be a Christian? III. ADMINISTRATION. The whole question of royal right, duty and responsibility, may be summed up in one word, administration. And this word, with its sublime right of meaning, applies with full force to the Christian. In a high and kingly sense, and in a sacred, priestly sense, he is administrator for the kingdom of God in this world. True Christians are not only royal lives but royal givers. (*J. C. Allen.*) *All saints kings and priests*:—It was a "new song"—new, because its topics were new; for what so new and strange as God incarnate shedding His blood upon the Cross, and by virtue of that offering redeeming the most distant nations of the earth, and making them, however low in estate, to reign kings and priests upon the earth—new, because it is the song of the new creation; the song of those to whom "behold all things have become new," new hearts, new lips, new hopes, new graces.

I. KINGS—that is, half, the lasting, eternal half of their Christian greatness. They are kings, because they are members of that Christ who is King of kings and Lord of lords. This royalty of Christ on earth, thus partaken by the Church His body, is clearly stated in many passages of Holy Scripture. To Christ as man, all "power was given both in heaven and in earth" (*Matt. xxviii. 18*); and, again, "all things are delivered unto Him by His Father" (*Luke x. 22*). He is "the heir of the world," so that all is of right His. And it is the Father's good pleasure to give this kingdom to His little flock (*Luke xii. 32*), that is, the Church; whereby the meek, that is, the little ones (*Matt v. 5*), the saints of God, become in Him the rightful inheritors of the earth. II. Thus are they kings; BUT THEY ARE ALSO PRIESTS. In earlier days, before the blood of sprinkling had been shed, and men made members of the great High Priest, they had no access to God themselves. If they desired to approach Him it could be by some intermediate help, some priest who, deprecating the wrath of God by the blood of victims, might on their behalf offer prayers for them, and, if it might be, become the channel of blessing to them. But Christ being come, the only true Priest (*Heb. ix. 7-14, 24*; *x. 19-22*) and the single Victim of price, the access to God is opened, the veil rent, the entrance to the holiest unclosed. Thenceforth may every member of His body exercise a child's right of approaching his Father. In connection with the great doctrine, which in its consequences is obviously of great importance to the whole theory of the Church, its powers, and privileges, there are, in these distracted days, two main errors, held on two opposite sides, both of which are of imminent danger. The one of these is the doctrine of some of the liberalising or neologian party, the other, that of the Roman Catholics. The former, or neologian party, so hold fast the doctrine of the separate priesthood of Christians as to deny and disown altogether all authority and power and priestly offices as exercised towards some Christians by others; thus making each single Christian his own standard of doctrine, life, authority, and worship. The latter, or Roman Catholic party, so hold the existence of authority and priestly offices within the Church, exercised towards Christian people, that they really deny, in a great many important points, the royal priestliness of single Chris-

tians. The former reject lawful and necessary authority, for the sake of vindicating the personal rights of baptized people; the latter tyrannise over the just and inalienable rights of baptized people, for the sake of maintaining an excessive and unscriptural authority. (*Bp. Moberly.*) **We shall reign on the earth.**—*The reign of the saints on the earth.*—I. The fact that THE CHURCH OF GOD WILL EVENTUALLY TRIUMPH OVER EVERY OBSTACLE, and that all its members will partake in the joys of its bloodless victory, is as certain as anything in revelation. According to heathen mythology, Astræa, the daughter of supreme power and law, and therefore the protector and benefactor of men, dwelt with them during the golden age, in free and familiar association. On the introduction of the silver age which followed, she ceased such friendly intercourse, and made her abode chiefly among the lonely mountains; and though she occasionally still visited the abodes of men, it was only amid the shades of evening when she could not be seen. But when the brazen age began, she fled to heaven to return no more. Such is the classic myth; and well does it display the hopelessness in which heathen fable finds and leaves the human race. But we have the fact, not the fable; and the fact, thank God, is far more cheering than the fable. 'Tis true the golden age has passed away, and the silver age has come, and, worse than that, the brazen and the iron age. It is true also, that because the fine gold has become dim and the pure gold adulterated, a curse has fallen on our world, and the Divine favour has been in a measure withdrawn. But still, not wholly. Though in a measure God has turned away His face from us, yet, with loving-kindness and tender mercy is He gathering us again to Himself. The origin and history of the Church of God and Christ are proof. Every civilised nation this moment on the earth is in possession of Christianity, in one degree or another. Christianity made them civilised; for though in some cases, in a measure, civilised before its introduction, alas, what a civilisation! how false and how impure! II. THE FORM OR MODE OF THIS DOMINION—how the saints shall reign upon the earth. When we would rightly understand these words of promise, that the "saints shall reign upon the earth," we must cast out of our minds everything that panders to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and look for a meaning more spiritual and heavenly. 1. The saints shall reign, as reigning implies holiness. Every true servant of God, in a measure, now reigns over sin and Satan—over an evil nature, and over the Prince of this world; and so far forth, therefore, he reigns in holiness. 2. They will, in the next place, reign numerically. Now the true and undoubted servants of Christ are a small minority in the world; and yet, even now they exert a mighty influence. But, in the happy times to which we are permitted to look forward, what is now but partial will be almost total. Christians will have the control of all things; it will belong to them of right, numerically, and it will belong to them because of their fitness to use it. They will fashion public opinion, because, in fact, they will constitute the public. 3. Again, they will reign because their Master will then triumph. He is triumphing now in every individual that is converted to God, in every increase of holiness in the Church, in every new introduction or further spread of the gospel in heathen or Mahometan lands. But His triumph then is to be more marked and decisive. 4. Lastly, the saints will reign in millennial times, as reigning implies happiness. The great English dramatist makes one of his monarchs say, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown"; and no doubt there is much truth in it; but still, the secret conviction of poor human nature is more faithfully expressed in the proverbial phrase, "Happy as a king." On the strength of this we may say, that when it is foretold that the saints shall reign upon the earth, it is meant to be intimated by the figure, in conformity with this universal feeling, that they shall be highly blessed and enjoy great felicity. Can it be doubted that such will be their lot? (*W. Sparrow, D.D.*)

Vers. 11-13. **The voice of many angels round about the throne.**—*The great festal gathering and song of heaven.*—I. THE COMPLACENCY WITH WHICH CHRIST LOOKS BACK ON HIS OWN ATONING WORK AND SUFFERINGS. II. THE PERPETUAL EFFICACY OF THE SAVIOUR'S SACRIFICE. III. THE CONTINUED IDENTITY OF CHRIST'S PERSON AS GOD-MAN MEDIATOR. IV. REDEMPTION IS THE GRAND THEME OF ADORATION FOR UNREDEEMED ANGELS AS WELL AS FOR THE REDEEMED FAMILY OF GOD. V. THE PRE-EMINENT DIGNITY AND BLISS OF THE RANSOMED SAINTS. VI. THE UNITY WHICH PERVADES THE HEAVENLY RANKS. VII. THE VISION SEEMS INTENDED TO PREPARE THE CHURCH ON EARTH FOR HER OWN SUFFERINGS, AND RECONCILE HER TO HER APPROACHING TRIBULATION. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The hymn of the angels and of creation:—*

I. First let us understand THE ATTITUDE AND POSITION OF THE ANGELS. They are round about the throne of God, around the elders—that is, the Church—and around the living creatures. They are, therefore, the sentinels and the guardians of Divine and human things. So they stand equally around the emblem of eternal power, around the fourfold forms of life, around its drudgery as well as its ambition, and around the Church, distressed and broken and divided and betrayed. No thought of fear dims the lustre of their eyes, nor lessens the precision and the emphasis of their song. And it is worthy of notice that they secure ample leisure for worship. It is a lesson that ought not to be lost upon our hurrying age. Thank heaven, there are still secluded corners of our land where the shriek of steam-engines, the clamour of crowded streets, the driving of pulse and brain, is unknown; where the valleys laugh and sing with the standing corn, where the hilltops are silent as the seas, and where jaded brains may shape some thought of God. But heaven is busy too, and there is work enough to be accomplished. There are sinners lost in the wilds of the hill, and in loathsome dens of the city, who will need to be brought home. There are claims and needs and dangers of the Church the world over—energies to be cherished, works to be encouraged, impurities to be purged, sorrows and disappointments to be assuaged. And with all these interests in hand their eye is upon the throne, for here only do angels and men alike behold, and thence only receive the interpretation of life and the wisdom and guidance for work. And well were it, not only for its honesty, but even more for its progress, if the commerce of England and Scotland and Ireland were directed by the laws which abide in God. Only those who obey can worship, and only those who rightly worship can truly live. And so—II. The central thought of the angels, like that of the Church, was THE WORTHINESS OF CHRIST. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” And as it was in the mind of the Church, so here again this worthiness is associated with sacrifice. For most men suffer only when they must, and they fail to perceive that sacrifice at once tests what we are, and makes us what we ought to be. In this way Christ’s sacrifice proved His essential worth, and, beyond this, proves to-day His permanent worth to His people. It is not His power alone. That never elicits adoration. It is the goodness that reigns paramount within Him which men worship and love. III. THE RESPONSE OF CREATION. The poet of Palestine had said, many a year before St. John lived, that there is neither speech nor language throughout the earth in which the voice of the firmament is not heard. “The songs of the spheres” was another method of expressing the same truth. The sky vibrates with praise as the great stars stand out in their places. “Earth, with its thousand voices,” said Coleridge, “praises God.” And while these call to man, whatever his tongue or his worship, man the world round feels that he must respond. He cannot help worshipping. Under the gaslight, and in the heated atmosphere of some remote meeting-place in the big town, he may lustily proclaim that God is nothing to him. But when the gas is out and the cheering companions are gone, when he is alone on the mountain-side, and the thunder booms out its terror above and the lightning flashes death around him, a voice within answers the voices without, and the infidel is compelled to pray. And as man must worship, so his worship adopts a more expansive form than that which angels take as yet (chap. vii. 12). His eyes, too, are indeed filled with the image of the Lamb. What mind can forget Calvary and Olivet? But away beyond the present fact he contemplates the continuous recognition, and age upon age he hears the same hymn. And further yet, and fuller, the worship of the Lamb broadens into the worship of the Godhead. It is offered to “Him that sitteth upon the throne.” And it expresses the spiritual history of every saint. We see ourselves in this hymn. When first our life lay before us, and we took it up and placed it upon the altar of God’s salvation, Jesus Christ was all, was everything to us. Then as faith deepened and threw up the greater and stronger life, we saw Jesus in all things. And then we beheld the love of the Father to be as great and tender as the love of the Son, and the strength of the Holy Ghost gathered round us and within us, and God in His blessed Trinity embraced all things. (*W. M. Johnston, M.A.*) *Christ the object of angelic worship*.—I. THE HOMAGE HERE REPRESENTED AS RENDERED TO THE SAVIOUR BY THE ANGELIC HOSTS. 1. Angels are the worshippers to whom our attention is more particularly directed in the text. 2. The nature of the homage which they render Him. The particulars here specified relate rather to the natural than the moral attributes of our Saviour, to His greatness rather than His goodness; that is, to His prerogatives and glories which He most obscured in

His humbled state, or of which He then emptied Himself, as the Scripture expresses it. 3. The ground of this homage. As a person inherently possessed of all Divine excellences and glories, the Son of God, in common with the Father, has an incontestable title to the worship and obedience of the heavenly hosts. He has a further claim as the author and preserver of their existence, and as the source and dispenser of all their happiness. It is not, however, on this ground, strong as it is, that the homage manifested in the text is rendered Him. Look to the passage and you will at once perceive that the basis on which the Son of God is worshipped, both by the representatives of the Church and by the angelic hosts, is His death or sacrifice. But does the death of Christ give Him any new or peculiar claims to the homage of the heavenly hierarchies who are not immediately interested in its benefits? Unquestionably it does, and some of these claims it is not difficult to discover. His death was not only in itself the most extraordinary event that ever took place, it afforded incomparably the most magnificent display that ever was exhibited of generosity and kindness, of compassion and tenderness. It is an essential part of true excellence to admire excellence in another, and the admiration ought to be proportioned to the measure of excellence displayed. What a resistless impulse, then, must it communicate to the adoration and praise of the holy angels, to contemplate the death of the Son of God. Recollect next the display of the Divine character and perfections exhibited in the death of Christ, and you will see in it another reason to impel the hosts of heaven to honour and adore Him. Consider, again, that while the death of Christ contributes so much to advance the honour of God, it contributes not less to promote the happiness of man. "They rejoice over one sinner that repenteth." In further illustration of this topic, I might add that it is the opinion of the great Mr. Howe, and of some other eminent divines, that angels, though not redeemed by Christ, are confirmed in happiness in consequence of their union to Him. It is further certain that in Him angels and saints are united in one harmonious and happy association, and that it has pleased the Father by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." And these wonderful arrangements furnish angels with another reason to worship and serve "the Lamb that was slain." II. THE ARGUMENT SUGGESTED BY THEIR CONDUCT TO INDUCE US TO RENDER THE LAMB A SIMILAR HOMAGE. 1. We have a direct and personal interest in His death. If His matchless love excites, as well it may, the admiration even of creatures not immediately interested, and impels them "to prepare new honours for His name," what words can express the claims which He has to our admiration, gratitude, and praise? 2. We are still in circumstances of danger. Many and formidable are the enemies who seek our ruin, numerous and painful are the toils and hardships we must encounter ere we reach our "Father's loved abode." There is one, and only one, who can protect you amid your multitudinous dangers, and bring you to the land which you wish to reach. "Jesus Christ, the captain of salvation, having been made perfect through sufferings, will conduct you to glory," if only you will confide in Him. What an argument to love and trust, to adore and praise Him! 3. I might remark that, allowing He has conferred on angels higher capacities and higher joys, our happiness has been procured by Him at a price far more costly. To communicate to angels existence and happiness required nothing more than a simple volition of His irresistible will, a single word of His omnipotent voice. It was not thus that the happiness of the apostate race could be restored, that the redemption of our lost world was to be achieved. Lessons: 1. How inconceivably glorious must heaven be, and how worthy of our earnest desire and our constant pursuit! 2. How reasonable that we should render Divine honours to the Lord Jesus. 3. How important that we cultivate a love to the exercises of heaven. 4. This subject suggests a test by which we may ascertain whether we are fit for heaven. To ascertain your meetness for heaven you have then only to inquire whether you take delight in devotional exercises and in holy pursuits and enjoyments. 5. This subject shows us the folly of the irreligious. Think of heaven with all its joys and splendours. Contrast with this hell with its horrors, a place of outer darkness and of gnashing of teeth. (R. Balmer, D.D.) **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.**—*The worthy sacrifice of Christ*.—I. CONTEMPLATE CHRIST AS HE IS REPRESENTED UNDER THE CHARACTER OF A LAMB. The lamb is an appropriate symbol of innocence and meekness. Never were the lamb-like virtues brought to so severe a test, and never were they so strikingly portrayed. A recluse in his cell may reason justly on the duties of forbearance and forgiveness, but it is difficult to carry into practice the dictates of sober solitude, yet

Jesus gave not only the theory but the practice of every possible virtue. II. MEDITATE ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST. 1. He was slain decretively in the purposes of Jehovah. 2. He was slain emblematically by the sacrifices under the Levitical dispensation. 3. He was slain instrumentally by the hands of the Jews. 4. He was slain really by the justice of God for the sins of His people. III. CELEBRATE HIS PRAISE. 1. He is worthy of the trust and confidence of His people. 2. He is worthy of the adoration and praise of the redeemed spirits above. 3. He is worthy the adoration of the purest intelligences of the universe. 4. He is worthy of the final conquest of the world. (T. Adkins.) *Christ the Lamb slain*:—I. THE WONDERFUL PERSON of the glorious sufferer will furnish occasion of unceasing admiration to the great multitude before the throne. II. The multitude before the throne will have occasion to give glory to the great Redeemer when they contemplate THE MYSTERIOUS NATURE OF HIS SUFFERINGS. III. Similar acknowledgments will be called forth when the saints in heaven remember THEIR SINS as the procuring cause of the Saviour's sufferings. IV. The sufferings of the Redeemer are considered by the multitude before the throne as the result of A PLAN CONTRIVED BY THE INFINITE WISDOM OF GOD in His eternal counsels. V. The sufferings of the Redeemer are considered by the multitude before the throne as the genuine effect of HIS OWN UNCONTROLLED AND SOVEREIGN PLEASURE. To Himself alone, and to the free exercise of His own good will, this act of grace and humiliation must be referred. VI. The sufferings of the Redeemer are considered by those who stand around the throne as affording THE BRIGHTEST MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS. VII. The sufferings of the Redeemer present new occasion of admiration and triumph to the multitude before the throne, because thereby REDEMPTION IS COMPLETELY PURCHASED. (John Russell.) *Glory ascribed in heaven to the Lamb*:—1. The sacrifice of Christ has had the effect of developing the hidden perfections and glories of God in what may be considered their Christian and evangelical aspect, both in the Church above and in the Church below, consequently all glory is due to Christ upon this principle. 2. The elementary state and high reward of heaven is the result of our Saviour's work, and consequently the glory must be due to Him. 3. The relationship in which the triumphant Church will stand to her Lord will induce these sentiments, and lead to this triumphant song. In what relationship does He stand to us here? "God with us." In what relation does He appear to the Church above? "God with them." (J. Dixon.) *The worthiness of Christ to receive man's riches*:—I. BECAUSE HE IS THE ORIGINAL PROPRIETOR OF IT. The gold that any man holds in his hands is his in a very secondary sense; his property a few years ago was in the possession of others, and a few years hence it will pass from him into other hands. All material wealth belongs to Christ. II. BECAUSE HE HAS ENABLED YOU TO PROCURE IT. Why have you wealth more than others? Has it come to you through heirdom, legacy, or your own industry? In either case you have it through Christ. III. BECAUSE HE GIVES YOU THE QUALIFICATION TO ENJOY IT. Who gave you the unmiserly spirit, the bodily health, the mental capacity by which you can enjoy your riches? IV. BECAUSE HE WILL MAKE THE BEST USE OF IT. 1. The best use of it for yourselves. There is no better investment. Your contributions to Him serve you in many ways. (1) Serve to test your character. (2) Serve to detach you from materialism. (3) Serve to ennoble your character. It is a great thing to be trusted, to be thrown upon your honour. Christ trusts you. 2. The best use of it for the world. When you are gone Christ's Church will be here working with the means you have entrusted to it, and working to spread truth, virtue, and happiness through the world. (Homilist.) *Praise a duty*:—No other duty is enjoined so often in the Scriptures as praise. The Bible is full of music. The woods in the summer days are not so full of bird-notes as this sacred book is of voices of song. Christian life can realise the Divine thought for it only by being songful. The old fable of the harp of Memnon, that it began to breathe out sweet music the moment the morning light swept its chords, has its true fulfilment in the human soul, which, the instant the light of Divine love breaks upon it, gives forth notes of gladness and praise. (J. R. Miller, D.D.)

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1-17. The Lamb opened one of the seals.—*The development of good and evil in human history*.—I. The development of good in human history. 1. The good is embodied in a personal life. "He that sat," &c. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He was the Right—incarnate, living, acting; and this, not only during His corporeal life here, but in all His disciples through all times. 2. The good embodied in a personal life is aggressive in its action. "He went forth," &c. Wherever the sunbeams break, darkness departs; so with the right, it is always conquering. In its aggressiveness it moves—(1) Righteously. The "horse" is the instrument it employs to bear it on to victory. The good is not only pure in its nature and aims, but pure in its methods. (2) Triumphantly. The "bow" carries the arrow, and the arrow penetrates the foe. (3) Royally. "There was given unto Him a crown." Right is royal, the only royal thing in the universe, and the more perfectly it is embodied the more brilliant the diadem. Hence Christ is crowned with glory and honour, "exalted above all principalities and powers," &c.

II. The development of evil in human history. 1. War (ver. 4). The spirit of murder burns throughout the race. The "red horse" is ever on the gallop. 2. Indigence (ver. 5). Famine generally follows the sword. 3. Mortality (ver. 8). With every breath we draw some one falls. 4. Martyrdom (vers. 9-11). (1) A martyr is one who dies for the truth. (2) He is one who in heaven remembers the injustice of His persecutors. (3) He is one who in the heavenly world is more than compensated for all the wrongs received on earth. In heaven they have—(a) Purity. (b) Repose. (c) Social hopes. 5. Physical convulsion (vers. 12-17). (1) Our earth is constantly subject to great physical convulsions. (2) These are always terribly alarming to ungodly men. (3) The alarm of ungodly men is heightened by a dread of God. "The wrath of the Lamb." A more terrific idea I cannot get. It is an ocean of oil in flames. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

A white horse.—*The going forth of the gospel*.—1. That the preaching of the gospel cometh not by guess amongst a people, but is sent and ordered as other dispensations are, and hath a particular commission. It is one of the horses He sendeth here. So, Acts xvi., the Spirit putteth them to one place, and suffereth them not to go to another place. There is not a sermon cometh without a commission. 2. That the success of the gospel goeth not by guess. The gospel hath its end as well as its commission (Isa. lv. 10; 2 Cor. ii. 14). 3. The gospel is most mighty to conquer when Christ armeth it with a commission and doth concur therewith (2 Cor. x. 4). 4. From this description of the horse and his rider and his employment, observe that the great end of the gospel, where it cometh, is to subdue souls. That is the end of a ministry, to bring souls in subjection to Christ (2 Cor. x. 5). And it hath its end when Christ's arrows are made powerful to pierce hearts (Eph. iv. 8; Psa. lxxviii. 18). 5. The gospel conquereth more or less wherever it cometh. When Christ is mounted He is going to conquer, if it were but to take one fort or one soul from Satan. 6. Taking this conquest and flourishing estate of the gospel to relate to the first times thereof when it came into the world. Observe that most frequently the gospel at its first coming amongst a people prevaileth most, and hath more sensible success than at any other time. So was it when it came first to the world, its victories were swift and speedy, increasing more for a few years at that time than afterwards in many generations. (James Durham.)

Conquering, and to conquer.—*The Redeemer's conquests*.—I. THE ADVERSARIES OF OUR REDEEMER. 1. The powers of darkness. 2. All men in an unrenewed and unconverted state. 3. False systems of religion, which, although perhaps assuming the name of Christianity, are hostile to its spirit and design. II. THE INSTRUMENTS WHICH OUR REDEEMER EMPLOYS. 1. The publication of His Word. 2. The agency of His Spirit. III. THE VICTORIES OF OUR REDEEMER. 1. They are founded upon His right to universal domain. 2. They are continuous, and widely extended. 3. They are essentially connected with the diffusion of pure and perfect happiness. In conclusion: how important it is—1. That you should yourselves surrender your hearts in personal subjection to the Redeemer's power. 2. That you devote your energies to the further extension of His empire. (J. Parsons.)

The future triumph of our King.—I. THE ILLUSTRIOUS PERSONAGE DESCRIBED. 1. His spotless character. "A white horse." 2. His warfare. "A bow." 3. His exaltation to regal dignity. "A crown." 4. His gradual conquest. "Conquering and to conquer." II. SENTIMENTS AND REFLECTIONS SUITABLE TO THE SUBJECT. 1. We

should cultivate and cherish the most exalted estimate of the person of Jesus Christ. 2. The imminent peril in which those are placed who continue among the adversaries of Jesus Christ. 3. Are you among His true and faithful subjects? 4. Strive, by every means in your power, to advance the extent and glory of His dominion. (*J. Clayton, M.A.*) *The Conqueror*:—Behold the combat beyond all others important, the combat between Christ and Satan for the human soul. I. THE CAUSE OF STRIFE—the soul. A colony of heaven had been taken by the powers of hell, and the effort to restore it to allegiance was the main cause of this celestial war. The domination of Satan over the human soul is despotic, degrading, and destructive. II. THE BATTLE. The Divine Saviour stronger than the strong man armed as our champion. The first grapple seems to have been the temptation in the wilderness, the next in the performance of miracles, the next the death grapple, the last the rising from the dead and ascension into heaven. III. THE VICTORY. It was complete, it was benevolent, it was unchanging. The attack which the Saviour made upon the enemy was such as to tear away the very source and energies of his power. In the time of the Lord's victory we do not see traces of carnage, nor hear orphans wailing the dead; but a voice breathes the comfortable word, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." The triumphs of the Saviour brighten with the lapse of time. Time cannot tarnish their lustre, nor death itself destroy. (*W. M. Punshon, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. *Another horse that was red; . . . to take peace from the earth.—The cry of the world in selfishness*:—The red colour is the emblem of bloodshed, the destruction of life. It recalls the vision of Isaiah concerning the traveller from Edom, "with dyed garments of Bozrah," or that later vision of St. John concerning the King of kings, who leads the armies of heaven, His "vesture dipped in blood." "There went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." It is every man for himself—the spirit of selfishness. Let me draw for you a picture of yourself. You are a person with certain wants, natural and material—wants, that is to say, of those things which are needful for the support and well-being of your bodily life. You are a person with certain tastes, natural and intellectual, at least as necessary to the prosperity of your mind as food is to the prosperity of your body. You have also certain desires and aspirations which we may call natural and spiritual. Then, your life is surrounded by certain circumstances, which you may modify, but cannot possibly do away with. Amongst these circumstances are your fellow men and women. And these have wants and tastes and desires of their own; the wants may be identical with yours, in which case your neighbour's possession of the things wanted may well interfere with your own possession of them. You are in each other's way. Or your tastes and desires may be dissimilar, in which case you are liable to be irritated and outraged by contradiction. In any case you cannot go through life without having your path traversed every day by others, going their own way, regardless of you. Let us go further. You are supremely important to yourself, and you have been so from your childhood. See how a child thinks his own affairs the first, and at all moments thrusts upon your notice the thing which happens to be especially interesting to himself. And certainly in this we, grown men and women, cannot say that we have "put away childish things." But this self-importance is a reasoning spirit. I am always present to myself, you say; I cannot get away from pain and discomfort and disappointment and the hundred ills that my flesh is heir to. I move through life, the centre of my own little world; it all concerns my happiness or misery; how, then, can I say that I am not supremely important to myself? I may stop at the requirements of my earthly life, or I may go further. I may be a religious sort of person. But is this realisation a cure for my selfishness? Alas, that one must answer, No! For the possible selfishness of the religious person is quite the strongest and most terrible form that selfishness assumes. Now, it is my own soul, my own eternal happiness, my own personal salvation. Look at your own life, at your own heart, and say, Is there nothing of this spirit in me? For, after all, this selfishness seems so natural. How can one help it, in the lower interests of the body—far, far less in the higher interests of the soul? How can one help it? The one thing to be sure of in this world of crossing interests is oneself. Surely St. John's terrible vision is overdrawn. What has it to do with me, that blood-stained figure, with the great sword? Surely my harmless, natural, inevitable egotism does not look like that in heaven? But stay, and ask yourself, Why not? I am

not alone in the world. A thousand million others are engaged in this strange dance of life, equally with me. Each one may be supreme unto himself. Each one has his own place; to him I am as he to me. And if this be so, what must result from it but one vast scene of conflict, world-wide and age-long? How shalt not peace be taken from the earth? How shall not men kill one another? How shall not the spirit of conflict, the dazzling horseman, with the bow and with the crown, go forth "conquering and to conquer"? It is the spirit of Jesus which is wanted here. And what is that? Go back to the thought of the great renunciation of the Son of God. Surely it is the everlasting condemnation of selfishness. Not the terrible vision of St. John, not the extremest picture of horror that man's mind can conceive, can ever delineate too fearfully the spirit which is set in such antagonism to the spirit of Jesus Christ. (*A. H. Simms, M.A.*) *The spirit of war*:—This vision of the blood-red horse corrects the idea which we might have entertained from the fact that the Prince of Peace had begun His reign. We should have supposed that the progress and triumphs of the gospel would at least have assured to the earth a deliverance from the miseries of war, but it is not so. Since the time of the first preaching of the gospel to the present moment, there have not been twenty years of continued peace amongst the nations and people with which, as we suppose, the various visions in this Book have to do. And this history of war is not occupied with the wars of Christians against heathen, but with the wars of professing Christians against one another. Before the Reformation, when all the Christians of Europe professed to belong to one Church, there was a constant state of warfare amongst them. Since then the state of war has been quite as continuous—not Protestants with Papists only, but Protestants among themselves. Thus in this country, on the murder of Charles I., an ultra-Protestant republic was established, and the very first thing it did was to go to war with the only Protestant republic then existing—the Dutch. In our own time also we have seen the most powerful republic in the world, a republic more Protestant or Evangelical than any other, engaged in a long and sanguinary civil war. So that we have before us this most remarkable fact, that for 1,800 years the Gospel of Christ and the Demon of War have ridden side by side. For the rider on the red horse does not himself war or fight. He is apparently engaged in stirring up strife in which he personally takes no part. He is no human tyrant or general, but, as it were, the embodiment of the Spirit of War, who has power given to him to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **A black horse; . . . a pair of balances.**—*The cry of the world in want*:—It is a vision of scarcity, of insufficiency, not of absolute famine. The world does not seem to contain enough for all, and there happens a continual struggle for the bare necessities of bodily life. Every year this is becoming more evident. Most present-day problems have their roots in it, and these problems press with such terrible force upon us that, I suppose, St. John's vision can never have seemed more picturesquely true than it seems to-day. With our constantly growing population, the difficulty increases by leaps and bounds. The effect of it is an absorbing anxiety, a restless elaboration of contrivance—How can these present difficulties be overcome? and what new ones will start into sight when the old ones have disappeared?—till a large part of life seems taken up by the problem of how to live. Is any precept of Christ harder than this, "Take no thought for your life," &c. Perhaps if we were alone, with nothing but our own personal salvation to think about, it would be easier. But you are not alone. Others depend on you. Husband, think of your wife; think of the children whose future depends so much on you. And if we go down in social life to the lowest depths of poverty, the struggle for existence becomes piteous. It is terrible to face it, but it is well to face it sometimes. In this abyss, insufficiency has become destitution; the struggle has lost all that it seemed to have of manliness and force; it has deformed life into a chaos of brute instincts; it has become parent of crime, disease, and death. Such is the vision of human want. And from the living creatures before God's throne the appeal is made to Jesus Christ, "Come!" What is it, this appeal to the "Lamb as it had been slain"? It is for manifestation of the higher life, the true life, the eternal life which is the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ. Sometimes the least spiritually impressionable person is forced to see that there is indeed a higher life. The pressure of earthly things relaxes its hold upon you for a moment; above the ceaseless clamour of the world's voices the voice of Jesus makes its way to your heart, never lessening its claim upon your life, never taking

from the promise its consolation, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Yes, there is indeed a higher life. But it seems so hard of attainment in the life that I am living now. I am in the shadow of the black horseman; I am a sharer in the great struggle for existence. The thought of the higher life is wearisome; the life of prayer, of hourly communion with a Divine Friend, the life of the love of God, of joy in the knowledge of His presence and love, the life of glad obedience, of patient endurance. It all seems so hopeless. We cannot think of higher things. Is not this true of you? The struggle for existence makes us slaves in spirit. Surely the appeal from the living creatures to Christ is wanted for us to-day: Come, with Thy knowledge of the Father's will. Come, with Thy strong rejoicing in the Father's love. Come, with Thy unflinching obedience. Come, with Thy victorious endurance. Let Thine be the Spirit which takes possession of a world in want, O Thou Lamb of God! (*A. H. Simms, M.A.*) *Scarcity in Gospel times*:—This vision has been explained in two ways, naturally and spiritually, and either yields a tolerably good signification. Both explanations are consonant with what we gather from the rest of the seals, which is, that much in the time of the Messiah's triumphal progress is not such as we should have expected. 1. We should have expected that the times of the Gospel would have been times of almost universal prosperity. So it had been prophesied (*Ezek. xxxvi. 30; Hosea ii. 22; Joel ii. 19*). And we should the rather have expected this, because the preaching of the gospel does much to discourage many vices which occasion distress and ruin in this world, such as intemperance, drunkenness, wastefulness, gambling, immorality, &c. But it has not been so. From the first preaching of the gospel there has been just the same hard struggle for sustenance as there was before. Of course there have been countries in which the poor have not suffered from comparative scarcity, as in newly-planted colonies, but the tendency of things has been always to bring about, sooner or later, the universal struggle for a bare subsistence. 2. But the riding of this horse-rider has been interpreted spiritually to mean this, that in the day of Christ's power there has not been, nor will be, that plentiful supply of the wholesome and nourishing Word of God which we should have expected. The more thoroughly we examine the history of religion, I do not mean of the Church, but of individual religion, the more we shall discover the truth of this. For well nigh 1,500 years the Word of God has been altogether out of the reach of the vast majority of Christians. Till the invention of printing each copy had to be written fully and fairly out. And look also at the comparative fewness of those who if by chance they possessed a copy could read it. But we must not for a moment limit this scarcity of the wholesome nourishing Word to the scarcity of Bibles. The nourishment of the vast body of the Church is through teaching and preaching, and there may be a vast circulation of Bibles, and yet these Bibles unread and their contents undigested. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Price lists made in heaven*:—People do not generally suppose that God has much to do with price-lists. They go up and down, and millions higgler over them every day, but no one thinks of anything Divine connected with them. But whether men realise it or not, price-lists are made in heaven. John hears the rates of corn and bread announced by the same heavenly powers by which these mystic horses are called into action. Whatever the weather, the crops, the quantities of money in the country, the extent of speculation in the market, or other subordinate causes may have to do with it, the prime and all-controlling cause is the decree of the throne. It is God from whom we have our daily bread, and it is by His will that it is plentiful and cheap, or scarce and costly. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. A pale horse: . . . Death, and hell.—*Death on the pale horse*:—I. THIS HORSE AND HIS RIDER SET OUT AFTER US AS SOON AS WE WERE BORN; THEY ARE PERPETUALLY GAINING GROUND ON US, AND THEREFORE SOONER OR LATER THEY MUST OVERTAKE US. II. IT IS AWFULLY UNCERTAIN WHEN HE WILL OVERTAKE US. III. IT IS EQUALLY CERTAIN, THAT WHEN HE DOES OVERTAKE US HE WILL STRIKE HIS BLOW, AND NOTHING CAN PREVENT IT. There is a great deal said at this day about the march of intellect. Yes; but intellect with all its march, never out-marches Death. He marches faster than intellect, and he will soon overtake. Nor can the greatest peace, holiness, and usefulness prevent it. IV. WHO THEN ARE THE CHARACTERS THAT, WHEN DEATH STRIKES THE BLOW, WILL DROP INTO HELL, IN THE LITERAL SENSE OF THE WORD? 1. Those who have never broken off their sins by true repentance. 2. Those who have not a personal interest in Jesus Christ by faith. 3. Those who

have not experienced the regenerating influence of God; die as you are, without being born again, and you will be lost. 4. Those who did once run well, but who have now ceased to run well. (*W. Dawson.*) *The life of faith in death:*—But what now are we come out to see? I. BEHOLD THE SEAL OPENED. Seals we use commonly to confirm and conceal, to make things sure, and to keep things secret. And thus death, as all God's judgments, is said to be sealed (Job iii. 3), and that with a firmer seal than of the Medes and Persians. In a word, men die not by chance, course of nature, influence of stars, but then and therefore, because it is appointed. That Christian who believes this, though he may desire David's arithmetic to number his days aright, yet will he never study the black and senseless art of calculating his birth and death. None but fools are curious and inquisitive to know that which is under God's privy signet. We are all as soldiers sent to sea with commission under seal, not to be opened till we come to such and such a point. Some deaths, indeed (as some clocks), give warning before they strike, with symptoms and signs infallible; but generally God hath seen this the best for us, that it should be for the general most certain, for the particular most uncertain, to him sealed, to us concealed; of which he would have us make these uses. 1. First, for our bodily health, not to be too careful, nor too careless. 2. Secondly, for our soul's provision, not to do as most that have set days of truce and peace, and in which they hang up their armour a-rusting, and their beacons unwatched; but as people that live in perpetual hazard of war have all things in a daily readiness for service upon the least alarm. 3. Whenever this horse comes to fetch away us, or any of ours, children, or friends, a believer stamps not, and rages not, murmurs not, repines not, as the wild Irishmen without hope; expostulates not with destiny, but with Aaron, lays his hand on his heart and mouth for his sons' sudden death, knowing what God hath sealed shall be and must be. II. The seal being thus opened, "come and see" THE CREATURE THAT ISSUES FORTH. Behold an horse, a fierce, a strong, a warlike, a speedy creature, so described by God Himself (Job xxxix.). Look, as the sturdy steed dashes out the little whappet's brains, so easily doth Death with the least kick and spurn of his heel the stoutest constitution, triumphing like an emperor over all sorts of people, treading on the necks of kings and princes, as Joshua over them in the cave. What, then, is the course the Christian takes? He neither foolishly thinks to resist or escape, nor yet cravenly yields; but addresseth himself for the encounter. III. Behold also THE COLOUR OF THIS HORSE, the colour of the withering leaf, pale and wan, symbolising and noting the effect he hath first upon the living, whom he appals. See we not often prisoners at the bar wane away, and dye as white as a cloth at the sentence of death pronounced on them. A second effect of this pale horse is after death, bereaving the bodies of all blood and colour, making them lifeless, till the fashion of them be utterly altered, the beauty consumed, and shape turned into rottenness. Oh, how grievous is this to such Absaloms, Jezebels, and Rosamonds, who have set much by their painted sheaths and pampered carcases. Dost they were, and to dust they must return. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vanity. IV. Well, then, behold also, even hell, THE PAGE AND FOLLOWER OF DEATH, attending him wherever he goes among the wicked sort. Whence it is that they are so often coupled in this book, death and hell. Look as the foxes wait upon lions, carrion crows upon armies, gaolers upon sergeants for a prey, so diligently does the devil on Death for a booty. No fowler does more cunningly stalk behind the horse, or creep behind hedges, to get his aim at the shy fowls. No sergeant hides his mace, no angler his hook more warily, knowing that else hell should never swallow so many. In this consists the devil's chiefest policy and our grossest simplicity, and even this is the cause of our sottish and foolish living and dying. (*T. Adams.*) *Views of death:*—I. THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN US OF DEATH. 1. Death is under a seal. It has a commission to execute, and cannot go beyond it: limits are fixed to it by the purpose and power of God, and it cannot break through them. Death is inevitable, because the Divine decree is unalterable. We fear death, and we fear hell; but he is more to be feared who has the keys of both. We are immortal till our time is come, and our work is done. The king of terrors, before he can level his dart so as to do any execution, must have a warrant from the King of heaven. 2. It is represented as riding: not creeping, walking, or running, but riding; which intimates that he moves swiftly, and often comes unexpectedly. It may also denote something of state and majesty: for it may be said of him, as of the other horseman, that he goeth forth conquering and to conquer. No wisdom can deliver, no strength can rescue, no wealth can ransom from this victorious enemy. 3.

Death rides on a pale horse, and this colour may denote the general appearance of mortality. 4. It is represented in our text as having hell following after it. The page is more dreadful than the master; death would not be so terrible, were it not for that which follows it. Death to a wicked man is but the beginning of sorrows: to make use of it, then, as a remedy for other griefs, is but like leaping out of the smoke into the flame. We may make a mock of sin; but can we make a mock of hell? II. OUR DUTY WITH RESPECT TO DEATH. 1. That we render the thoughts of death familiar to ourselves. 2. That we exercise faith in the providence and grace of God, both with respect to death and its consequences. 3. That we patiently wait and cheerfully submit to it. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The pale horse*:—I. THE FIGURATIVE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF DEATH. II. OUR DUTY RESPECTING IT. 1. Come and see the antiquity of death. 2. Come and see the extent of its devastations. 3. Come and see this spoiler conquered. 4. Come and see how death may safely be encountered. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Vers. 9-11. I saw under the altar the souls.—*Activity of the souls of the departed*:—I. St. John, we here read, was allowed to behold the souls of the martyrs, and they were living beneath the altar of the Lord. What, then, is the altar? In answer we say, that it is the place of a glorious and a happy security. It was to the altar that the murderer ran and clasped its horns, when the avenger of blood was in hot pursuit; it was to the altar, with all its beautiful accessories, the laver, the sacrifice, the shew-bread, and the golden candlesticks, that every mourner in Israel looked. Weary-hearted men, oppressed with the load of life, or weighed down by care, or burdened by sin, looked there and found an unfailing asylum. The martyrs are beneath the altar; they are under the security of its holy seal; they are hanging upon its strong horns; the persecutor's arm cannot reach them; the avenger of blood dare not come near them; they are kept by the power of God. The dust and defilement of earth, the fierce heat of flame, the lion's tooth, and the serpent's strangling coil, are all past; there is heaven's own calm; their souls are under God's care, and under the seat and the seal of Christ. II. But what is their state of feeling? Are they in a state of passive rest, or earnest enjoyment, or tranquil or animated hope? "They cried with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Is it possible that they desire vengeance? Did Jesus pray for His murderers? Did Stephen, the martyr, echo and repeat the prayer? And have not the rest of the glorious band of martyrs learned and used it? It cannot be that the martyrs should be under the altar of the Lamb, and yet have hearts for vengeance. It is the cry of their blood for vengeance, not of their hearts. Just as the blood of Abel cried from the ground against Cain, so does this blood cry for vengeance on that Cain-like satanic power which made them martyrs. But it may be objected that this destroys the very notion of the activity of their spirits. The picture before us is that of altar-covered souls asking for a certain consummation. And no doubt, for a consummation we may truly believe they do both wait and long. But that consummation will be with such vengeance as is here alluded to. And this shows us that while the sin of the persecutors, written in the blood of the martyrs, calls for vengeance, the cry of the martyrs may well be only for the day of Christ, and for the redemption of the bodies of the sons and saints of God. They long for the day of Christ, "because it is the year of His redeemed." But then it may be also said, and history will bear us out, that there is a certain cry of sympathy in behalf of friends and fellow Christians trodden down and persecuted, which issues by a kind of necessity in a cry of vengeance upon their persecutors. In the persecution which preceded that of Diocletian, we read how St. Cyprian addressed the African proconsul in the following words: "Be assured that whatever we suffer will not remain unrevenged; and the greater the injury of the persecution, the heavier and more just will be the vengeance." Nay, this very prophetic anticipation of vengeance upon the enemies of the Church of Christ is only a phase of that conformity of the mind of the saint with the will of God, which will form the very essence and perfection of the heavenly state. If God in His justice comes forth for vengeance upon sinners, every saint must give the hearty "amen" of an entire concurrence to the infliction. So it ought to be on earth, and so it must be in heaven. III. The explanation which we have given of the longing of the blessed departed for the year of Christ's redeemed shows us, at any rate, the activity of their souls. It tells us that being dead, they do not sleep, or even in a dream; nay, that they are well awake, and full of all that constitutes the life and activity of a living

soul. They think of the past, for they refer to it; they refer to the blood that has been shed; it is past, but they have not forgotten it. They know something of the present; for it is because the great consummation lingers, because they know that it does so, because the world still drives on in its wickedness; it is because of all this present continuing iniquity that the souls of the martyrs cry out. Again, they look to the future; their question discovers this; they are conscious that the day of vengeance and the year of redemption must come, and they earnestly inquire when it shall arrive. IV. Consider further the answer which they received.

1. First, white robes were given them; their dishonoured names are all enshrined in honour; they were dressed as in preparation for the marriage feast of the Lamb; and when thus arrayed, words of peace were spoken to them. They are told to rest, and we may well imagine them sitting in the tranquillity of a blissful hope. They were to wait till their brethren's arrival, which was to be through the same stormy straits as they had passed. 2. But then, is it only the martyrs that are thus reserved? Is it only they that wear white, and in that white array await the consummation? Nay, for there is a daily dying, which in many instances is no less precious in the sight of God than the glorious setting of a martyr's sun. Our beloved friends that have died in faith are thus before Him, they are in His very presence, they have the sunbeams of His radiant countenance shining directly upon their beatified spirits. 3. And they too, like the martyred spirits, are looking forward. They, like them, remember the past, and muse upon the present, and look to the future. And if so, they remember what they did on earth, and more than this, they remember those whom they loved, and whom they have left here. Death and forgetfulness do not affect that which is innocent and sinless. 4. And this thought is a sweet and holy solace. (C. E. Kennaway, M.A.)

The waiting of the invisible Church:—We may gather with all certainty from this wonderful revelation of the inner mysteries of the heavenly court, first, that God has a fixed time for the end of the world. It is also here revealed to us that God has fixed that time according to the measures of the work which He has to finish; even as Christ had a work to finish on earth; so that we read, again and again, that His "hour was not yet come." In like manner now in heaven, He has a definite foreseen scheme for the administration of His mediatorial kingdom; and according to the accomplishing of this work will be the time of His coming. 1. He has shadowed out to us the nature of the work that He has to do before the end comes; that is, to make up a certain number whom God has foreseen and predestinated to life eternal (Mal. iii. 17; Matt. xxiv. 31; Heb. xi. 13, 40). Whether this secret number be measured by the fall of angels, as some of old were wont to believe; whether the companies of angelic ministers shall be filled up by the redeemed of mankind, we know not, but we know certainly that, until the foreseen number is completed, the course of this turbulent world shall still run on. 2. Again, in this gathering out of the mystical body of His Son, God is carrying on the probation of mankind. In the inscrutable secrets of His providential government, He is so ordering the strife of the seed of the woman with the seed of the serpent, of the Church with the world, as to fulfil the manifold purposes of love and of long-suffering. (1) And, first, we see that this long-permitted strife is ordained for the perfecting of His saints. By it our patience, meekness, faith, perseverance, boldness and loyalty to Christ are ever tried; and by trial made perfect. (2) And this mysterious work, as it has an aspect of love towards the saints, so it has an aspect of long-suffering towards sinners. It is thus that God gives them a full season for repentance. He gives all things for our salvation—warnings, blessings, chastisements, sorrows, sicknesses, words of fire, and sacraments of love; He stays His hand, and leaves the sinner without excuse, that at the winding up of this weary life, "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." 3. And now, from all this, we see what ought to be the master-aim of our lives, that is, to make sure of our fellowship in that mystical number. (Archdeacon Manning.) *The cry of the world in oppression:*—The souls under the altar represent the whole company of the oppressed. The former troubles were general; all the world suffers, whether it knows it or not, from conflict and selfishness and want and mortality; and its suffering is expressed before the throne by the representatives of all the animate creation. Now it is the voice of one part which is heard, the voice of the oppressed. It is not the whole of human life which is involved, as in the opening of the first four seals. "The altar" is an altar of sacrifice, on which victims are offered. The appeal of the souls is not an articulate voice from blessed spirits in Paradise. It is just like that tremendous phrase in Genesis, "The voice of thy

brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground." It is certainly not a vision of the blessed saints cherishing a spirit of common revenge, but a cry to Christ, as in former cases, from the personified life of sufferers on account of right. It is a cry, in oppression, of the Christian world concerning the unchristian, of the believing world concerning the unbelieving. Christ proclaimed it years before: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." And the unbelieving world's weapons are very various. Because we have passed the times of persecution by the sword, at least in the civilised world, we cannot say that the force of this vision of St. John is spent. The world claims education. We need not put down the Faith by common violence, if we can destroy it at its foundation in the education of children. Are we awakened rightly yet to the reality of this oppression? These are the two chief ways in which, at the moment, the principle of St. John's vision is being worked out in Christendom. But there are many individual lives that can enter in a wonderful way into the meaning of it. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." Many a martyr-spirit is suffering to-day, so that none but God and the holy angels mark the suffering. The souls' cry for vengeance to the Lamb is of the same order as Christ's vengeance on St. Paul: that the spirit of the Lamb of God should take possession of the world, that the thoughts and desires of it may be brought, as St. Paul was, "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Avenge our blood with this glorious vengeance, O Thou Master, upon all them that dwell on the earth! There is, in this case, an immediate answer. "And white robes were given," &c. (*A. H. Simms, M.A.*)

Departed martyrs:—I. They live in SACRED SECURITY. "I saw under the altar the souls of them." The "souls," not the bodies; the bodies had been destroyed, their ashes were left behind. Souls can exist apart from the body—a wonderful fact this. II. They live in EARNEST CONSCIOUSNESS. They remember the earth, remember the cruelties they received on the earth, and long, not maliciously, but benevolently, for justice being done to their persecutors. No doubt their desire was that God would strike such a moral conviction into their hearts on account of their wickedness that would lead them to repentance. Souls in heaven do not forget the past. III. They live in HOLY GRANDEUR. "White robes were given to them." Or, more properly, a white robe, emblem of purity and conquest. (*Homilist.*)

How long, O Lord?—Calvin had this speech always in his mouth, breathing out his holy desires in the behalf of the afflicted Churches, with whose sufferings he was more affected than with anything that befell himself. (*J. Trapp.*)

The life of faith in death:—I. John, being in the spirit, could see spirits. Men, indeed, clad in flesh, can hardly imagine how a soul can have existence out of the flesh. Eagles can see that which owls cannot; so is that visible and credible to a spiritual man which to a natural is invisible, incredible. And yet even nature's dim eyes have been clear enough to see this truth. The soul's eternity is an inbred instinct in the souls of men. II. Now if this much revived John to see the soul's continuance after death, how much more to see their safety and rest under the altar; that is, under Christ's protection and custody. The phrase alluding to the altar in the tabernacle, which gave the offerings grace and acceptance; and partly to the safety of such as fled from the avenger to the altar. III. If John had seen souls at rest, though in poor and mean condition, yet were a corner of a house with peace to be preferred to a wide palace with disquiet. But behold, he sees not naked, beggarly, ragged souls, but adorned with white robes; that is, endowed now, and glorified with perfect righteousness, purity, clarity, dignity, and festivity, of all which white apparel hath ever been an emblem and symbol in Divine and human heraldry, a clothing of princes in their great solemnities of coronation, triumphs and ovations. The lilies, and Solomon, in all their royalties, not like unto the meanest of them. IV. Were heaven nothing else but a haven of rest, we know how welcome the one is to a seaskick weather-beaten traveller, and may by that guess how desirable the other should be to a soul that long hath been tossed in the waves of this world, sick of its own sinful imaginations, and tired with external temptations. (*T. Adams.*)

How long, O Lord, . . . dost Thou not judge?—*How long?*—I. THE WORDS AS FROM MAN TO GOD. Looking up to God, man breathes the deep-drawn sigh, "How long?" (*Psa. vi. 3, xlii. 1, xxxv. 17, lxxiv. 10, lxxxix. 46, xc. 13, xciv. 4; Hab. i. 2; Rev. vi. 10.*) These are the chief passages in which the expression occurs. Instead of dwelling on each in succession, let me thus sum up and classify their different meanings. It is the language—1. Of complaint. The righteous man feels the burden and the sorrow and the evil that have so long prevailed in this present evil world, and he cries, "How long?" Have these not lasted long enough? Would

that they were done! In this complaint there is weariness, and sometimes there is sadness—almost despair—when unbelief gets the upper hand. Creation groans. Iniquity overflows. Death reigns. The wicked triumph. 2. Submission. While impatience sometimes rises, yet the cry does not mean this. It is really a cry of submission to a wise and sovereign God. It is the cry of one putting all events, as well as all times and seasons, into His hands. 3. Inquiry. In all the passages there is an implied question. It is not merely, Oh that the time would come! but, When shall it come? 4. Expectation. It is the voice of faith, and hope, and longing desire. The present is dark, the future is bright; God's Word is sure concerning the coming glory; and so we, looking for and hasting to that glory, and depressed with the evil here, cry out day by day, "How long?" II. THE WORDS AS FROM GOD TO MAN. I note the following instances (Exod. x. 3, xvi. 28; Josh. xviii. 3; 1 Kings xviii. 21; Psa. lxxxii. 2; Prov. i. 22, vi. 9; Jer. iv. 14). Taking up these words of God as spoken to different classes, we would dwell on the following points: 1. Long-suffering. Jeremiah's words to Jerusalem are the words of a long-suffering God, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2. Expostulation. How long halt ye between two opinions? How long shall ye be of deciding? How long of trusting Me? 3. Entreaty. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? God beseeches man; He entreats him to give up his sin, to come and be saved. How long will ye refuse My love? 4. Earnestness. God's words are all sincere. He means what He says, and says what He means. "Ye will not come to Me!" "How often would I have gathered thy children!" "O that thou hadst known!" 5. Sorrow. Every moment's continuance in unbelief is vexing and grieving the Spirit. 6. Upbraiding. There is the land, the kingdom, why do ye not go in? The door is open; the way is clear. 7. Warning. How long will ye persist in your unrighteousness and unbelief? The day of grace is ending. The day of wrath is coming. Be warned. Flee from the wrath to come. (H. Bonar, D.D.) *The cry for vengeance from souls under the altar*:—First, the righteous are taken away, and no man regardeth it, as the prophet says (Isa. lvii. 1). Their days are cut short by violence and cruelty, and yet their persecutors live and are mighty. What did the heathen say to this, who had good report for their moral conversation? Is there no justice in heaven? Yes, here is the best assurance that can be demanded, a scene, as it were, acted in heaven, wherein is represented that the wrongs of the saints are fresh in memory, and shall never be forgotten. The poor oppressed is more likely to obtain redress against his enemy when he is dead than when he was alive. His soul is then most precious to the Lord, his prayer most fragrant, he is so near to Christ that he is next to the altar; his understanding is so enlightened that he knows what to ask and never fail. Here you have a petition, then, put up to a mighty King by some persons that had sustained injury. First, Consider to WHOM THE SUPPLICATION IS PREFERRED, to one from whom there lies no appeal, the King of kings and Lord of lords. And the words are so laid together that the souls under the altar do beseech Him by His three mighty attributes. He is the Lord, therefore they implore Him by that power which can do all things. He is holy, therefore they solicit Him by that goodness which detests oppressions. He is truth, therefore they urge Him by those promises made, which He cannot but accomplish. It is the Lord, holy and true, into His hands they commend their petition. He that makes his address to God, let him begin with His praise, let him commemorate His excellent greatness, let him delight to rehearse His titles of Majesty. No man can speak of the King of heaven according to His due honour, but it will procreate devotion and reverence; no man doth advance the name of God in the preface of his prayer, but it is a tacit confession that he prefers the glory of his Maker before his own necessity. I come to THE PRAYER ITSELF: the souls under the altar cry out unto the Lord to judge and avenge their blood. This is a voice which came not from earth but from heaven, and therefore we must maintain it. 1. First of all, vengeance being not usurped by the hand of a private man, but prosecuted under the shelter of lawful authority, like *usque quo Domine*. In this place it is not unlawful. It is a stirring up of that part of justice which distributes punishments to them that deserve them, and to demand it in a regular way is in no wise rugged to the law of charity. 2. But it is a second conclusion that the spirits of good men departed may cry out to have judgment pass upon tyrants for the effusion of their blood, because they can ask nothing inordinately; they that are confirmed in grace and cannot sin, they cannot make a petition that is over-balanced with the least grain of rancour or partiality. 3. The third conclusion is so cautious to give no scandal, so circumspect not to open the

least window to malice and hatred, that it resents the word revenge in this place to be of improper signification; and that which the souls departed sue for is not revenge, but deliverance. Deliverance? Of what? Not of themselves, who are out of harm's way, but of their brethren tormented here beneath. As who should say, How long, O Lord, wilt Thou not deliver the blood of our brethren, the poor members of the militant Church, from them that rage upon the earth? So I leave this point with a probable assent, but no more, that the saints desire not the vengeance of the ungodly, but the deliverance of the righteous. The next point is almost of the same piece, and very conjunct with the petition itself, it is THE MANNER OF PREFERRING IT which, to the greater terror of them that live by wrong hostility, is done with ALL VEHEMENCY AND IMPORTUNITY, with a loud voice, and a solicitous iteration. The heathen poets fancied that the souls in the Elysian fields did not utter their mind with audible and vocal sounds, but with a low whispering, as if reeds were shaken with the wind. Sometimes they would strive to speak out, but all in vain. This is fiction, and not philosophy; for separated souls speak not with corporeal organs, but with their wills and affections. Their words which they utter are their desires, which they send forth; and therefore David says, "Thine ear hath heard the desire of their heart." Oppression and tyrannising over the poor and helpless make the loudest clamours of any sins in the ears of God. Not the martyrs themselves, but the wrongs which they endured exclaim against their enemies. (*Bp. Hackett.*) *The recompense of martyrdom*:—I. THE MARTYR-CRY. It is the widow's cry, "Avenge me of mine adversary." "How long, O Lord (or, O Master), holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!" This has been that long and bitter cry of the ages. It may seem "narrow," or worse than narrow—it may be called bigotry, or worse than bigotry—to sympathise with such sentiments; but these words stand. Let modern sentimentalists tell us what they mean, or else boldly proclaim them false and cruel.

II. THE MARTYR-HONOUR. "White robes were given them." What a contrast to the poverty of their raiment here, as they came out of prison; to the blood-stains and filth upon their earthly apparel! III. THE MARTYR-REST. They get immediate rest as well as honour. "To you who are troubled," the apostle says, "God will recompense rest with us" (2 Thess. i. 7). The fulness of the rest—the Sabbatism (Heb. iv. 9)—is in reserve for the Lord's revelation from heaven; but rest, meanwhile, is theirs; rest, how sweet after the torture and toil of earth! It may be that there is peculiar rest for the martyr-band; and yet there is rest for all who are the Lord's, even though they may not have passed to it through the flames.

IV. THE MARTYR-HOPE. It is not expressly mentioned here. It is something which shall be given when the whole band is gathered; the whole martyr-band from the beginning. The seven epistles reveal that hope; and the three closing chapters of this book unfold it more fully. It is the hope of the first resurrection; of reigning with Christ; of entry into the celestial city; of the crown of life; of the inheritance of all things. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The cry for vengeance*:—It is their blood that cries; it is the wrong done to them that demands reparation. In so far as they may be supposed to cry, they have in view, not their enemies as persons, but the evil that is in them, and that manifests itself through them. At first it may seem difficult to draw the distinction; but if we pause over the matter for a little, the difficulty will disappear. Never do we pity the sinner more, or feel for him with a keener sympathy, than when we are most indignant at sin and most earnest in prayer and effort for its destruction. The more anxious we are for the latter, the more must we compassionate the man who is enveloped in sin's fatal toils. When we long, therefore, for the hour at which sin shall be overtaken by the just judgment of God, we long only for the establishment of that righteous and holy kingdom which is inseparably bound up with the glory of God and the happiness of the world. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*) *White robes were given unto every one of them.*—*White robes*:—I. White robes remind us of INNOCENCE. It is a grand thing to be innocent; it is more glorious to be virtuous. Each part of yonder powerful locomotive and of that stupendous tubular bridge has been tried by great pressure, and stood the test. So a man who has been tried by the pressure of temptation, and has stood the test, is virtuous. Never blame any human bridge or broken human engine unless you have been tested with a similar pressure. But what a blessing to know that though a man has fallen, God does not lay him aside as useless! The glory of the gospel is that it offers the white robes of innocence to guilty men and women. The sinner is not only forgiven, but transformed. His second nature is of a higher kind than the

first. II. White robes also remind us of SUCCESS. It is only the few who seem to succeed in this world. Carlyle speaks of men as being "mostly fools," while another writer describes the world as being "strewn with human wrecks." As a rule, a successful man possesses genius and enthusiasm. How seldom one sees a perfect man or a perfect work! How grand to be successful as a man, a father, a brother, a friend! Alas! how few are really successful! You set forth to be a pure and honourable man; as such, have you been a success? Are you a failure? Alas! it is true; the world is strewn with the wrecks of human resolves and aims. But the white robe of success is placed once more within your reach. The Lord will work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure, and you shall be successful as a Christian. III. White robes also remind us of BEAUTY. (*W. Birch.*)

Vers. 15, 16. *Fall on us, and hide us.*—*The last great prayer meeting:*—It is generally thought that none but the penitent really pray. And yet the day is coming when even impenitent people will throng together and hold a prayer meeting, and perhaps the most intensely earnest one ever upon record. Notice the time. It is future. It will be after the day of grace has passed, after the privilege for Christian prayer has ceased, and after human probation has been completed. Yes, when the righteous have ceased to pray, and are changing prayers on earth to praises in heaven, the impenitent will begin to pray as if they thought of it for the first time in their lives. It will be when Divine judgments are falling upon the earth. Where? In their homes? No, those prayerless houses will be shaking into ruins by an earthquake. In the churches? The day for churches will be gone. Why did they not hasten to them in the time of mercy? They will meet in the dens and caves, and among the rocks of the mountains. Who will be there? In ages when God's children were hunted down by foes, chiefly the lowly, the poor, met in such difficult retreats, but to this last prayer meeting kings will run, noblemen will hasten, courtiers and statesmen will speed, rich men and great captains will rush, and all who thought they could trust in the permanence of earthly things. No real Christians will be there. Mere professors and pretenders, deceived in heart or deceiving the very elect, and prayerless in their lives, may be expected; and when there they will contribute their part for the first time to the interest of a meeting, for they will pray voluntarily and with an earnestness they never knew before. What are to be the exercises, the services? No reading of the Word of God. None in that assembly will wish to hear it read or explained. They disowned it once, they dislike it still, for it must expose their sins and neglects. No preaching, because the day for that has passed. No psalms nor spiritual songs. To what will they pray? Not to God. At sea, when the tempest is raging, and all human control of the ship is lost, when the masts are torn away and the next wave that sweeps the deck may bury the company in the deep, the passengers and crew lift their entreaties, not to the storm, not to the waves, but to God, their only resort and refuge. But the prayer at this last meeting is not to God, nor is it to men. In their fears they call upon the mountains. Unwilling to call upon God in the day of prosperity, and disliking to have friends pray for them, their aversion clings to them as a fixed habit, and they are still determined not to cry unto the Lord. Nothing could once persuade them to do it, and now nothing can force them, for the human will is not converted by force. Rather than submit to God's way, they call upon everything else, idolising the deaf rocks and the dead mountains. These are their gods. Can anything else so portray impenitence and stubbornness of will? And why such a prayer for destruction? There are three reasons here given. I. *THEM DREAD OF SEEING THE FACE OF GOD.* Once that face was radiant with mercy. They might have been forgiven, but they would not seek His pardon. Oh, the lost opportunities, the rejected mercies! All gone for ever. They cannot bear the sight of Him whose offers of grace they so wilfully refused, and they ask the rocks to confer on them a merciless burial. II. *A FEAR OF THE JUSTICE OF CHRIST.* Once He was the Lamb of sacrifice, the atoning Redeemer, the entreating Saviour, ready to save all that would call upon Him for salvation. But they would not call. Their day of redemption is past, and Christ is coming as their Judge. They see punishment awaiting them, and perdition before them as the just desert of their treatment of Christ. III. *THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE.* There is for them no apology, no availing plea, no justification, no righteousness, no hope of future grace. (*W. M. Blackburn, D.D.*) *The last great prayer meeting:*—The first thing that strikes us about it is that this last great prayer meeting will be attended by a vaster assemblage of human beings than it is even possible for us to conceive.

Every grade of society has its representative there—men and women, young and old, the child and the hoary-headed, the lofty and the mean. They have come from every land. In a strange unity of woe the attendants at this last great prayer meeting are to be gathered together into one common centre. Again, this last great prayer meeting is to be, in the fullest and widest sense of the word, a united prayer meeting. There is a unity of sin, as well as a unity of holiness, and the attendants at this last strange audience are all thus bound together. Not that it is a real unity. There seems to be very little of anything like a corporate feeling in this last great gathering. Every man is engaged with his own thoughts, offering his own prayer, yet are they all brought together to one point, and all induced to address a certain particular class of objects, and to offer a certain particular kind of prayer by one vast, common, overwhelming necessity, which spreads its fearful influence over them all. It is a united prayer meeting; and as I contemplate that vast gathering, I find all earthly distinctions have vanished. Social distinctions have passed away. The prince kneels beside the peasant. Again, I observe that all ecclesiastical distinctions have vanished. Yet, again, I notice that in this prayer meeting every man is thoroughly in earnest. I wish I could say as much of the prayer meetings held here on earth in our day. Yet, again, I observe that these men who pray so well and so earnestly are precisely the people who were least given to that pursuit while on earth: the people we very seldom see at prayer meetings here. Yet, again, it is a meeting at which every man prays with a very definite purpose. If I were asked, What is the particular fault of our modern prayer meetings? I should say—Indefiniteness. Yet, again, I notice in this prayer meeting a peculiarity that we do not frequently observe in our gatherings for prayer. I find that every man prays for himself. Now I do not think we ought to confine our prayers to ourselves, but we should pray to a far better purpose if we sometimes prayed out of our own hearts, and asked for the things we ourselves need. People seem rather to aim at employing vague expressions than making their wants known in a spirit of believing supplication to God. And now we come to consider the strangest feature of all. While there are ten thousand times ten thousand voices, it may be, lifted up in supplication, yet we are astonished at observing that of all these prayers that go ringing around a startled world there is not so much as one single petition that is offered to Almighty God—not one. When these praying men were down here on earth they were always flying away from God; they did not want to have anything to do with Him; they could get on very well without Him; they were worshippers of nature; they were believers in second causes—not that they were all such by profession, but they were so practically. These men have made earth their God: they have bowed down before the spirit of this world: they have enthroned that subtle intelligence of evil who has usurped the sovereignty of this fallen world within their hearts. They have practically made him the lord of their will, and submitted their nature to his control; and now, when the last terrible moment comes, and these men are gathered together for their last great prayer meeting, not one of them prays to God. Why? Because the Nemesis of their own sin has come upon them. What is it? Before they would not pray to God, and now they dare not. Where is the answer to come from? These prayers are not addressed to God: they do not reach the place where His honour dwelleth: they dare not hope that they will penetrate into His ears and reach His heart. No: their own consciences forbid such an expectation. Such will be the last prayer meeting. And now I want to ask a question, Are any of you ambitious to bear a part in it? (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) *Terrified sinners in the last earthly scene:*—1. We have here a glimpse of the constitution and general condition of society at the time these prodigies befell the world. Suppose that the sixth seal were to be opened to-night, what would it find? Kings and emperors on their thrones; princes, nobles, dukes, and lords securely priding themselves in the prerogatives of their caste and station; rich people wallowing in wealth and luxury; men and women in high places and in low working the wires that fashion events; slaves toiling at their tasks and freedmen just out of their bondage; and evidences everywhere of a depraved and disordered state of things. This is what the judgment would find if it came to-night. And this, John tells us, is what it finds when it does come in reality. 2. There is one thing, however, which shall be very different under the opening of the sixth seal from what it is now. The self-security and composure with which godless people live will then be driven to the winds. Though all the judgments under preceding seals may have failed to appal or arouse them, they will not be able to maintain

their equanimity under what this shall bring forth. Self-possession, unshaken courage, dignified composure, philosophic thinking, hopefulness, assurance, and the last remains of the stern intrepidity and statue-like imperturbability which characterise some men now, will then have vanished from humanity. That day will destroy them utterly. 3. We notice also the correct interpretation which mankind will then put upon the terrific disturbances of nature around them. Storms, earthquakes, eclipses, and unusual phenomena in the heavens, are natural symbols of Divine wrath. Modern science calls it superstition. But when the vision of the text comes to be realised, woe to the materialistic, pantheistic, and atheistic philosophies with which men suppose they have rid themselves of the superstitions of antiquity! One flash from the judgment throne will confound them utterly. 4. Nor is it so much the physical prodigies as what they argue that renders the dismay so unsupportable. It is not the shaking, the obscured sun, the falling stars, the recoiling heavens, the moving mountains, so much as the moral truths they flash into the spirit, to wit, that God is on the throne, that sin is a reality, that judgment is come, and that every guilty one must now face an angry Creator. It is not nature's bewildering commotions, for they would willingly have the falling mountains cover them if that would shelter them from what is much more in their view, and far more dreadful to them. What they speak of is, God upon the throne, the fear of His face, the day of reckoning, and the wrath of the Lamb. These are more than all the horrors of a universe in convulsions. 5. And how pitiable and absurd the expedients to which they are driven! Oh, imbecile people! When prayer would have been availing, they scorned and detested it as mean and useless; and now that it is futile, they go at it with a will. Still more absurd is the direction in which they address their prayers. Once they considered it folly that man should call on the living God; but now they pray to dead rocks! Once they thought it philosophic to deny that He who made the ear could hear prayers, or that He with whom is the Spirit, and whose is the power, could answer them; but now they supplicate the deaf and helpless mountains! And yet weaker and more insane is the import of their prayers and efforts. Omniscience and omnipresence are among the natural attributes of God. The very things before these people's eyes should have been enough to teach them this. And yet, philosophers as they are, their proposal is to conceal themselves from the Almighty, and so elude His wrath! Often had shelter and peaceful security been offered them in the mercies of the loving Saviour, and as often had they despised and rejected them; but now the silly souls would take the miserable rocks for saviours! Oh, the foolishness of men who think it folly to serve God! (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Presumption running into despair:—*

I. THE HORROR OF THE REPROBATES. 1. The persons thus amazed with terror are described in the precedent verse, "The kings of the earth," &c. The greatness of man, when it comes to encounter with God, is weakness and vanity. Is he great? Be he never so high, there is One "higher than he, and the Highest of all regardeth it" (*Eccles. viii. 5*), and will subject it. Is he rich? Were he the eldest son of Mammon, and sole heir to all the usurers in the world, can his gold save him? Is vengeance afraid to strike his vessel because his sails be of silk and it is ballasted with refined ore? Shall he buy out his damnation with coin? No, heaven will never take bribes. Is he a chief captain? Be his looks never so stern, his speech never so imperious, impetuous, he may command here and go without. "Man is not saved by the multitude of an host." 2. "They said." They open their lips to confess the invincible and inevitable power of Christ. (1) The sense of present misery takes away atheism. The day of judgment, when it comes, shall find no atheist. (2) The saying that comes from them is desperate; whence note that, in God's just punishment, desperation is the reward of presumption. They that erst feared too little shall now fear too much. Before they thought not of God's justice, now they shall not conceive His mercy. 3. These necessary occurrences thus considered, let us pass to their invocation, wherein is exemplified their error. Here we must observe, To what; For what they call. (1) To what. They are mountains and rocks, unreasonable, yea, insensible creatures. (a) Negatively, it is clear that they have no acquaintance with God, therefore know not how to direct their prayers unto Him. (b) Affirmatively, this presents a soul amazed with fear and folly. They call to the mountains that can neither hear nor answer. (2) For what. The benefit that they would have the rocks and the mountains do them is to fall on them and hide them. (a) Despair is ever wishing for death, often impatiently snatching at it in this world; but when the last day comes, so greedily longing for it, that to be sure of it, they desire the mountains to dispatch them. (b) Observe that rocks and

mountains are far lighter than sin. Such a weight bore our Saviour that He groaned under it. (c) Observe that before these wicked were lords of nations and countries; now they would be glad of one hole to hide them. Of all their dominions they beg but the barrenest parcel, a rock or mountain; and that to do them a poor office, to conceal them. How much doth man's avarice and ambition covet here, how little contents him hereafter! Nothing helps when God will smite; mountains and rocks are no defence when God pursues (Jer. xxii. 15). God hath a hand that can strike through forts, rocks, and bulwarks. The heavens "melt at the presence of the Lord; if He touch the mountains, they smoke" for it. II. THE JUDGE, FROM WHOM THEY DESIRE TO BE HIDDEN. 1. "From the face." It was ever the fashion of guiltiness to fly from the presence of God. Adam had no sooner sinned, but he thrusts his head in a bush. Sin's inevitable effect is shame. "Of Him that sitteth." Christ now sits in glory. While He was on earth how little rested He! Hast thou laboured? thou shalt have ease: hast thou travelled in the ways of grace? thou shalt sit on the seat of glory. "On the throne." Christ at this day shall appear in His true majesty. 2. "From the wrath." The wrath of Christ in His justice. (T. Adams.) From the wrath of the Lamb.—*The wrath of the Lamb*:—I. ITS UNEXAMPLED STRANGENESS. Who ever saw a lamb in a rage? The more difficulty you have in exciting wrath, the more terrible it is when it appears. II. ITS INFINITE PURITY. "The Lamb" is the emblem of innocence. This wrath of the "Lamb" is not a passion, but a principle. It is not malign, but benevolent. It is not against existence, but against its sins and its crimes. Conclusion: Learn from this that we turn our greatest blessing into the greatest curse. Our optic and auricular organs may become so diseased as to give to the most beautiful objects and melodious sounds in nature a power to convey into us the most poignant anguish, and so our moral nature may become so corrupt as to turn love into wrath, and blessedness into misery. (Homilist.) *The wrath of the lamb*:—The first thing which strikes us about the expression is its extreme dramatism. There is nothing so dramatic, in my opinion, as the sight of an emotion contrary to the nature. When a man who has always hid his griefs bursts into tears, when a man, like Arnold, who has always veiled his anger, gives way for once to passion, we are impressed with something like a sense of tragedy; it is a bitter day in summer; it is a storm upon a lake. How can we think of the love of God as interrupted even for a moment by a thing called wrath? Can we any more conceive a limit to the love of God than we can conceive a limit to the power of God? The state of mind he is describing is the wrath of a lamb—a particular kind of wrath. He is considering a mode of anger which is not an interruption of love, but itself a phase of love. The wrath of the Lamb is the wrath of love itself. It is no more an interruption to Divine love than the haze is an interruption to the heat of the morning. The wrath clouds the love; the haze clouds the morning; but both the one and the other have grown out of the very thing they obscure. There is an anger which is incompatible with the absence of love, which could not exist unless love existed before it. Here, then, is the subject which rises before us—the difference between the wrath of the Lamb and the wrath of the lion, between the anger of love and the anger of nature. Now, it seems to me that there are three distinct points of difference between them. 1. And first, I would observe that the wrath of the Lamb, or sacrificial spirit, differs from the wrath of the lion in being purely impersonal. The wrath of the lion says, "I, king of the forest, have received an affront; some one has presumed to do an unkindness to me." The wrath of the Lamb says, "An unkind thing has been done." It keeps the "me" out of the question altogether. It looks at the deed in itself. It refuses to consider the sense of personal injury as a main feature of the case. You have a son who has defied your authority, spent his substance in riotous living. You are incensed at this act of individual disrespect. You resolve to bring him to his senses; you say, "We shall see whether he or I shall be master here." Now, that is quite a legitimate mode of anger, and quite a legitimate ground for it; but it is not the wrath of the Lamb. It is neither good nor bad. It is simply an appetite of nature like any other appetite—like hunger. But it is possible for a father in these circumstances to be filled with indignation on a different ground altogether. It is possible for him to see in his son's delinquency, not an act, but a principle. It is possible for him to feel, not that an insult has been offered to his pride, but that an injury had been done to the universe. It is possible for him to experience, not the sense of a wounded self-love, but an anger from the fact that love itself has been violated. This is the

wrath of the Lamb. The Son of Man has reached a splendid impersonality in His judgment of the world. Though Himself at once the greatest and the most wronged of all, He refuses to measure the wrong by His own feeling of pain. He throws Himself into the position of the meanest, the lowliest. I pass to a second point of difference between the wrath of love and the wrath of mere nature. 2. And it is this: The wrath of nature must begin by tearing out pity; the wrath of love is a wrath created by pity. In the former case our indignation is stimulated by hiding the prospective photograph—by shutting our eyes to the possible goodness which the bad man may yet attain. In the latter case the indignation is stimulated by exactly the opposite process—by bringing out the prospective photograph, and considering what the man might be made to become. This brings me to a third point of difference between the two kinds of wrath. 3. They express their feeling in a different formula. The wrath of the lion says, "I must have satisfaction"; the wrath of the Lamb says, "Justice must be satisfied." There is all the difference in the world between giving me satisfaction in a quarrel and satisfying my justice in a wrong. The wrath of the Lamb is always a redemptive wrath. Its first impulse is to buy back what has been enslaved, to restore what has been wrongfully taken, to set at liberty what has been bruised. The wrath of the lion will be satisfied if the delinquent is dead; the wrath of the Lamb pauses not until it learns that the delinquency itself has been wiped away. And this renders powerfully suggestive that theological epigram which represents Christ as paying the debts of humanity. Nothing in a short compass could more completely describe the facts of the case. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) *The wrath of the Lamb*:—There is something of appalling significance in so paradoxical an expression as this, of the "Wrath of the Lamb." It makes the wrath trebly potent that it should be wrath, long suppressed, but at length discharged, of a nature essentially and exceptionally meek, patient, long-suffering, easy to be entreated, hard to be angered. *Furor fit læsâ sapius patientiâ*, says the Latin proverb: patience, trespassed upon too often, is converted into wrath. And if, O patience, the long-suffering that is in thee becomes wrath, how great is that wrath! Plutarch says of the Roman populace, on the occasion of a certain tumult, "they thought that the wrath of Fabius now provoked, albeit he was naturally so mild and patient, would prove heavy and implacable"—all the more so, indeed, because of that natural disposition now abused and overstrained. An eminent critic observes, in arguing that all great effects are produced by contrast, that anger is never so noble as when it breaks out of a comparative continence of aspect; it is the earthquake bursting from the repose of nature. Charlevoix, in his "*Histoire de St. Domingo*," remarks of the sea of the Antilles and neighbouring isles that it is commonly more tranquil than ours; "but, like certain people who are excited with difficulty, and whose transports of passion are as violent as they are rare, so when the sea becomes irritated, it is terrific." (*Francis Jacox, B.A.*) *The wrath of the Lamb*:—The lamb is the most simply innocent of all animals. Historically, also, it had become a name for sacrifice. Under this twofold reason Christ is set forth as the Lamb. The lamb is but the complemental gentleness of God's judicial vigour. We must have the right to believe in the real Christ, and not that theologic Christ which has so long been praised, as it were, into weakness, by the showing that separates Him from all God's decisive energies and fires of combustion, and puts Him over against them, to be only a pacifier of them by His suffering goodness. Our Christ must be the real King—Messiah—and no mere victim; He must govern, have His indignations, take the regal way in His salvation. His goodness must have fire and fibre enough to make it Divine. Wrath must be kept as a moral, not merely animal, passion, or it will connect associations of unregulated temper that are wholly unsuitable. We understand by wrath, as applied to God and to Christ, a certain principled heat of resentment towards evil-doing and evil-doers, such as arms the good to inflictions of pain or just retribution upon them. It is not the heat of revenge. It is that holy heat which kindles about order and law, and truth and light, going in, as it were, spontaneously to redress their wrongs, and chastise the injuries they have suffered. Is it, then, a fact that Christ, as the incarnate Word of God, embodies and reveals the wrath-principle of God, even as He does the patience, or love-principle, and as much more intensely? On this point we have many distinct evidences. 1. Christ cannot be a true manifestation of God when He comes in half the character of God, to act upon, or qualify, or pacify, the other half. If only God's affectional nature is represented in Him, then He is but a half manifestation. If

the purposes of God, the justice of God, the indignations of God, are not in Him—if anything is shut away, or let down, or covered over—then He is not in God's proportions, and does not incarnate His character. 2. Christ can be the manifested wrath of God without being any the less tender in His feeling or gentle in His patience. In the history of Jesus we see occasions in which He actually displays the judicial and the tender, most affectingly, together and in the very same scene, as in His denouncing and weeping over Jerusalem. 3. God, without the wrath-principle, never was, and Christ never can be, a complete character. This element belongs inherently to every moral nature. God is no God without it; man is no man without it. It is this principled wrath, in one view, that gives staminal force and majesty to character. 4. It is a conceded principle of justice that wrong-doers are to suffer just according to what they deserve. In Christianity God is not less just or more merciful, but He is more fitly and proportionately expressed. 5. One of the things most needed in the recovery of men to God in this very thing—a more decisive manifestation of the wrath-principle and justice of God. Intimidation is the first means of grace. 6. We can see for ourselves that the more impressive revelation of wrath, which appears to be wanted, is actually made in the person of Christ, as in His driving out the money-changers and denouncing the hypocritical Pharisees. 7. Christ is appointed and publicly undertakes to maintain the wrath-principle officially, as the Judge of the world, even as He maintains the love-principle officially, as the Saviour of the world. He even declares that authority is given Him to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man. But the wrath-principle in Christ is only that judicial impulse that backs Him in the infliction of justice whenever justice requires to be inflicted. And it does not require to be inflicted always; it never ought to be when there is anything better that is possible. Put it down, then, first of all, at the close of this great subject, that the New Testament gives us no new God, or better God, or less just God, than we had before. He is the I AM of all ages, the I AM that was, and is, and is to come; the same that was declared from the beginning—"The Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*)

The great day of His wrath.—*The wrath of God and the Lamb*:—I. WHO ARE THE PERSONS WHOSE ASPECT AND APPEARANCE SHALL THEN BE SO DREADFUL TO SINNERS? It is God, the Father of all, and the Lamb of God. II. HOW COMES THE WRATH OF THAT GREAT DAY TO BE SO TERRIBLE? 1. It is wrath that ariseth from the clearest discoveries of the love of God neglected. 2. It is wrath that is awakened by the expensive methods of salvation being slighted (*Isa. v. 4; lv. 1*). 3. It is wrath that must avenge the affronts done to the chief messenger of God's mercy. 4. It is such wrath as ariseth from the patience of God, tired and worn out by the boldest iniquities of men. 5. It is such wrath as shall be executed immediately and eternally.

III. HOW VAIN ALL THE REFUGES AND HOPES OF SINNERS WILL BE FOUND IN THAT DREADFUL DAY, TO AVOID THIS WRATH AND VENGEANCE! 1. Rocks and mountains, whose aid is sought in the last extremity of distress, will be but as spiders' webs. What folly to call upon creatures to help them against their Creator! (*Prov. ix. 21*). 2. Rocks and mountains, though places of secrecy and concealment, cannot hide them from the eyes of God (*Prov. xv. 3; Jer. xxiii. 24*). 3. Rocks and mountains, though bulwarks of defence and places of security, cannot stand before the indignation of the Almighty (*Nah. i. 2, 6*). 4. Rocks and mountains falling upon us are instruments of sudden death. To conclude. 1. What a wretched mistake it is to imagine that God is all mercy, and Jesus Christ nothing else but love and salvation! 2. The day of Christ's patience makes haste to an end (*Psa. ii. 12*). 3. How very different will the thoughts of sinners be in that day! (*Isa. ii. 10, 21*). 4. What hideous and everlasting mischief is contained in rejecting the gospel of Christ! 5. Sinners, consider your ways, the danger you are in, and the need you have of a Saviour (*Psa. lxi. 2*). 6. You, whose defence is the Rock of Ages, continue in Him (*Rev. ii. 10*). (*T. Hannam.*)

The wrath of God:—And this wrath impends over every impenitent and unforgiven sinner. I. IT IS SURE TO FALL UPON HIM IN DUE TIME. It is not a simple possibility. It is not merely a threat to terrify him. It is as sure in the future as God Almighty's Word and throne. 1. Eternal and Omnipotent Justice has decreed it. 2. Revelation declares it on almost every page. 3. The providence of God illustrates and confirms His Word. II. IT IS SURE, IN DUE TIME, TO FALL UPON THE SINNER IN ALL THE TERRIBLENES OF ITS POWER AND SEVERITY. 1. Here mercy tempers justice. Here wrath is restrained and grace works. Here the blood and intercession of Jesus Christ, and the tears and prayers

of the Church, prevail to mitigate the severity of God's anger. 2. This is the world of probation, not of final award. 3. The day of reckoning is appointed after death. 4. "The wrath of the Lamb" will not break forth till the great day of assize shall have come. So that all we know and see of the Divine wrath against sin and incorrigible sinners, in this life, is only an "earnest" of that awful tempest that will burst in fury upon the ungodly when "the great day of His wrath" shall have come.

III. THIS WRATH WILL BE JUSTLY DESERVED. It might have been turned aside; voluntary sin, and the persistent refusal of mercy and grace, will have provoked it. It is not simply the wrath of a God of eternal righteousness, hating all iniquity and bound to vindicate outraged justice in the interest of good government; but it is also "the wrath of the Lamb," kindled by slighted love, by rejected mercy, by the blood of the covenant counted an unholy thing, by all His bloody sweat and agony and intercession despised! (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *The great day and the great question:—*I. WHY IT IS HERE CALLED "THE GREAT DAY OF WRATH." 1. It may be called the great day of wrath inasmuch as no other preceding day of wrath ever equalled it. If all the tempests that ever roared, and all the vivid flashes of lightning that were ever seen, and all the hoarse thunders that have ever rolled, and all the roaring of the sea and every noise that has taken place, were all united together in one great swell, it would be nothing to the confusion of that great day. "The heaven shall pass away with a great noise." We are told that if you put one drop of water upon an anvil, and some heated iron over it, and strike the iron, that drop of water will explode, and make a sound equal to that attending the discharge of a musket. If one drop of water will produce such a sound, what will it be when all the watery vapours surcharged with fire shall burst in one mighty and terrible crash? 2. It may be called so if we remember that it will be the last day. The sun will shine, on the morning of that day, for the last time. All the wheels of nature will come to a standstill; all the mysterious and intricate movements of time will cease. 3. But we may call it a great day of wrath, more particularly, if we remember that it will be the judgment day. 4. It will be a great day of wrath if we consider, moreover, the Judge who will preside on that day, and His character. Jesus Christ Himself will be the Judge—very consoling to the believer, because the Judge will be his best Friend; exceedingly annoying to the sinner, for he will have sins revealed that he would not have known for ten thousand worlds. Jesus Himself, who is impartial, who will then be inexorable—He will be the Judge. Ah, now is the time. The Saviour will listen to your cry this night. Therefore, when we consider who is the Judge, that He will be inexorable, and will not be then entreated, we may say that it is a great day of wrath. II. "WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND?" A safe and Scriptural answer to this question is, indeed, very important. 1. "Who shall be able to stand?" Not the swearer: he has asked God to destroy his soul and body, and now all his prayers shall be answered. Not the liar: all liars shall have their part in "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Not the drunkard: he will receive something now more hot than alcohol. Not the hypocrite: the mask will fall off. Not the formalist. Not the backslider. And thus we may go on answering the question in a negative way. 2. I fancy I hear a voice coming from some one in this audience—"Well, I am very glad that you have made an exception of me: I am sure that I do not belong to the bundle of swearers," &c. Stop, friend, there is one bundle yet; if you are not there, well, then, we must put you aside. Where is that large bundle of gospel hearers—men and women who have heard the Word and have not obeyed it? You are there. 3. Those, and those alone, will stand in the great day of wrath, who are resting entirely upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1) They will have their characters publicly vindicated. (2) They will gather in the fruit of their labours. (*J. D. Smith.*) *Safety in the day of wrath:—*I. WHOSE IS THE WRATH HERE SPOKEN OF? As a Lamb the Saviour stands on Mount Zion, surrounded by a thousand hosts of His redeemed; as a Lamb He appears before the throne, receiving the prostrate adoration of the elders; as a Lamb He appears as a Bridegroom waiting for the New Jerusalem, "adorned as a bride prepared for her husband"; and as a Lamb He is represented as standing in the very midst of the throne, with His wounds all fresh, intimating to us that He is still sustaining to His Church the functions of a prevailing, unchangeable, everlasting priesthood. And this image is manifestly designed to set before us various attributes in the character of our Redeemer. First, no doubt it is designed to endear to us the mild and gentle attributes of His nature; to show to us how patient He is to forgive injuries, how long He will bear with the sinner's affronts, how hard it is to arouse Him from the serene calm

of His holy nature, what a "strange work" it is with Him to punish and destroy. But in the text there is an adjunct to this image, which at first seems to take away from its fitness and propriety; it would seem to suggest to us attributes of an opposite and conflicting kind; for who ever heard of "the wrath" of a lamb? Why is it that, on this occasion, the Saviour appears not under one of His more majestic titles—as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," tearing the seed of the rebellious to pieces? This title is retained even in describing the solemn day of Christ's appearing as a witness, as a warning, as a setting forth of the aggravated character of man's disobedience, and the utter exclusiveness of a despised salvation. II. WHAT IT IS IN THAT DAY THAT WILL MAKE "THE WRATH OF THE LAMB" SO TERRIBLE. 1. First, it will be because then this "wrath" will be felt to have been deserved. Well may the Lamb say to those who have refused Him on that day, "What more could I have done for you that I have not done? I gave Myself to the insults of men, to the buffetings of Satan, to the piercing of the sword of justice, to the degradation and shame of the Cross." 2. Again: the "wrath" will be felt to have been deserved on account of the light we enjoy, and the means used by the offended Man to bring us to a knowledge of Himself, and to constrain us to embrace the offers of His love. 3. Then another consideration which will make this wrath so terrible will be its utter implacableness, the awful consciousness that it can never change through the ages of eternity, that the Lamb will never put on those aspects of gentleness, and pity, which were turned towards us in the day of our probation and our hope. III. WHO ARE THEY THAT "SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND"? Of course the first answer to this is, they are those who are in Christ Jesus. Who are they that shall stand? Why, they are those who feel that they have made Christ their one entire sole dependence: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." "Trust in the Lord; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." "O Lord, our Lord, other gods besides Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." Then, once more: there is good hope that we shall be able to stand in the day of Christ if we are of those who are waiting for, and hastening to, and desiring His appearing. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Who shall be able to stand in the last judgment?*—There will assuredly come a day of judgment. The material universe symbolically prophecies some such a moral crisis in the history of man. The flowing river, the growing plants, the breathing tribes, the planetary systems, all tend to a crisis. The unremitting increase from age to age in the human family, viewed in connection with the limited capacity of this planet to sustain animal existence, irresistibly indicates some such a turning point in human history. The universal and concurrent references of the human conscience through all ages and lands, give a high probability to the dawn of such a moral juncture. The Bible settles the question. The sentence preceding the text calls it a great day. It will be "great," on account of the number and variety of the moral beings that will be assembled together; great, on account of the results which will then be effected—redemptive providences ended, and the agencies of a righteous retribution brought into full play; great, on account of the thrilling interest it will awake through all the realms of moral existence the universe over; great, on account of the Divine glories that will then be displayed. But our point now is—Who shall be able to stand on that day? In order to illustrate this solemn question I shall suppose a case. What under a legal charge could enable you to look calmly forward to the coming day of trial, feeling that you could stand? We can only conceive of seven things which would answer this purpose. I. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF INNOCENCE AND THE POWER OF SHOWING THAT THE CHARGE HAS NO FOUNDATION. II. AN ASSURANCE THAT THE EVIDENCE WILL BE FOUND INSUFFICIENT TO CONVICT. There will be—1. The omniscient Judge. He knows everything about you. 2. There will be present the persons to whom and through whom you have sinned. 3. Then there will be conscience within you bearing the strongest testimony against you. III. A FEELING THAT THE CRIME WITH WHICH YOU ARE CHARGED IS VERY INSIGNIFICANT. No. Sin, believe me, is no trifling matter. 1. Think of it in its relation to God. It is a violation of the most righteous laws, for He is your Sovereign. It is a violation of the highest trust; for He is your Proprietor, and you are His stewards. It is a violation of the most wonderful love. He is your loving Father—your merciful Redeemer. 2. Think of it in its bearing on yourself and on the universe. "One sinner destroyeth much good." This then will not serve you, will not enable you to stand in the judgment. Another thing that might answer the purpose in the supposed case is—IV. A FELT CAPABILITY OF PROVING THAT THE CRIME WAS COMMITTED ACCIDENTALLY, NOT BY PURPOSE. V. FAITH IN THE SYMPATHY OF THE WHOLE

COURT IN YOUR FAVOUR. VI. AN ABILITY TO PROVE THAT YOU HAVE RENDERED SIGNAL SERVICE TO THE STATE. VII. THE ASSURANCE THAT SOME ONE HAS SUCCESSFULLY INTERPOSED BETWEEN YOU AND THE SUPERIOR AUTHORITY. On the pages of the Bible I find written in sunbeams, that in consequence of what Christ has done, and is willing to do, for us as sinners, we may escape the sad consequences of our sins, and stand triumphantly in the Day of Judgment. (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER VII.

VERS. 1-8. Four angels . . . holding the four winds.—*The four winds*:—I. THE EVENTS FIGURATIVELY REPRESENTED BY THE FOUR WINDS. Different opinions have been expressed respecting these winds. Bishop Newton and other writers understand by them those Pagan persecutions which assailed the Christian Church prior to the time of Constantine, and which were removed when he took the Christian religion under his protection. The text evidently includes all winds that injure the Christian Church and impede true religion in the world; but Constantine only suspended one wind to let loose another, equally, if not more, injurious than the wind of persecution; I mean the winds of error, formality, earthly-mindedness, and general corruption. Mr. Jones, author of the history of the Waldenses, makes these winds to mean the influences of the Holy Spirit, which, he says, were withheld from the Church when she became the favourite of the state under Constantine. It is quite true that the influences of the Holy Spirit are frequently represented in Scripture by the figurative term “winds.” Still this cannot be the true meaning of the term “winds” in this passage, for this reason, the four angels are commanded to restrain these winds till the servants of God are sealed; whereas this sealing cannot be effected without the influences of the Spirit. What, then, are we to understand by the winds mentioned? I answer, two things: 1. Divine judgments. Wars, famine, pestilence, the overthrow of kingdoms, and the universal wreck of all earthly things. The particular judgments to which these winds refer are, I think, those mentioned in the sixth seal, at the close of the sixth chapter, and whose fearful operations are represented by the seven trumpets in the eighth chapter. 2. All events and influences unfavourable to the cause of Christ. The wind of persecution; the wind of false doctrine; the wind of delusion and wild fanaticism; the wind of temptation; the wind of infidelity; the wind of open profanity and blasphemy; the winds of affliction, adversity, and distress; by all of which the Church is frequently assailed. These things are called “winds,” because they produce agitation and commotion—breaking the branches, blasting the fruits, and uprooting the trees of God’s spiritual vineyard. They are called “four” winds, to show their universality, their wide-spreading desolation. They are called winds of the “earth,” because earth is the scene of their operation—they are for ever excluded from heaven; their coming from the four cardinal points at once shows their violence, rage, and fury. II. THE AGENTS TO WHOM THEY ARE COMMITTED. This notion of angels ruling the winds is very ancient. Herodotus says it was held by the Persians; Eusebius says it was held by the Phœnicians; Pausanias says it was held by the Greeks; Tertullian says it was held by the Romans; Seneca and Virgil say it was held by the Gauls; and most of these people worshipped these ruling spirits. Some understand by the four angels four monarchies, the Babylonian, the Grecian, the Persian, and the Roman; but this cannot be, for at the time to which this passage refers, the monarchies will have long been forgotten: while existing monarchies will be the objects of this vengeance, and not the executioners of it. Others understand by these four angels four emperors, Maximinus, Galerius, Maxentius, and Licinius, or their praetorian prefects; but the same objections stand against them as against the monarchies. Others think that four persecuting powers are meant. Others think four evil angels, or demons, are meant, who hold back the winds of the Spirit from blowing upon this valley of death, that the dry bones might live; or who are charged with destructive powers, as the messengers of an angry God; but as their work is first to restrain all antagonistic influences to the gospel, while it effects the high purposes of God, and then to execute the Divine vengeance at the day of Christ; and as these employments are nowhere ascribed to wicked angels, this cannot be the real meaning. These are four good angels.

This appears first, from the fact that they are here represented as taking a part with the fifth angel in sealing the servants of God; also from their being entrusted with such an important post—restraining wicked spirits, persecuting men, antagonist influences, and Divine judgments, till grace has worked out its wonders. Then their attitude—standing—signifies that they have no settled dominion; that they are the movable ministers of God; that they are ready to do His pleasure. III. THE GREAT BEING WHO COMMANDS THEIR POSTPONEMENT OR SUSPENSION. 1. Bishop Newton, and several other writers both before and since his day, tell us that this angel was Constantine the Great, who, they say, brought light, protection, and deliverance to the Christian Church that had been greatly afflicted under the persecuting tyranny of the Pagan Roman emperors. As far as I can judge, there is not even the shadow of a reason for thinking that this angel was Constantine. (1) The language applied to this angel is too sublime to refer to a fallen creature like Constantine. (2) The events which this angel is said to control, and the magnificent work he is said to accomplish, are not the narrow and limited circumstances of one man's life, but they stretch through ages; spread over kingdoms, continents, sea, and land. (3) The character of Constantine differs widely from what we must believe was the real character of the angel referred to in this passage. (4) The influences on true religion, which followed Constantine's interference, were, in many respects, just the opposite to those which the angel in the text is said to produce. This angel not only suspends persecution and postpones judgments, but vital godliness greatly prospers, as is evident from the number that are said to be sealed. Besides, this prosperity of genuine religion is not for a brief period, but it appears to extend through centuries. Now, is there anything analogous to this, which may be regarded as the result of Constantine's interference? That some good resulted to the then existing and persecuted Church, from this interference, we do not deny. Persecution was suspended. Still we maintain that the evil accruing from this change preponderates; it brought her in contact with a secular power that tarnished her purity, beclouded her glory, enervated her native power. 2. Well, who is this Angel? Why, the Lord Jesus Christ, the uncreated Angel of the Covenant, to whom the figurative language of the text applies to the very letter. This Angel is described—(1) By the point of His ascension. "And I saw another Angel ascending from the east." This was literally true of Christ; He came from the east, and hence He is called the East, or, as it is commonly rendered, "the Day-spring from on high." But His ascending from the east shows the favourable nature of His mission and character. The east is the great fountain of light, life, fruitfulness, purity, and joy; so this Angel, Christ, is called the Sun of Righteousness, that visits our world with healing beneath His wings. He is that bright, shining Sun, that never sets, but whose heavenly radiance always beams upon His Church, giving salvation, light, beauty, and joy. (2) By credentials He bears. "Having the seal of the living God"; which refers, first, to His office as Mediator between God and man. This refers to a custom among the kings of the earth, who have their own confidential servants to whom they deliver certain seals of office. These seals of office are the influences of the Spirit without measure; authority to bestow them, procured by virtue of His atonement; energy, to carry all His plans into successful operation; and all power, both in heaven and in earth, to render all things, creatures, and events, subservient to His designs. But His having the seal of the living God goes further still. It refers to the dignity of His person, as the Son of God, as well as to the glory and credentials of His office, as the Saviour of the world. Having the seal of the living God—that is, having in His own nature the visible impress of deity, the authentic testimony, proof, and demonstration that He Himself was the living God, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. (3) By the supreme authority He assumes. "He cried with a loud voice," the emblem of supreme authority and power; He commands or forbids as He pleases, and whatsoever He wills is done. (4) By the command He gives. "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees." No devastating wars, no raging persecutions, no fearful and wide-spreading judgments, must be permitted to hinder the cause of Christ. The contrary winds must sleep at the feet of their presiding angels, till the ark of salvation is filled with the whole family of God and safely moored in the peaceful bay of heaven. IV. THE REASON ASSIGNED FOR THEIR SUSPENSION. "Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." 1. The nature of it. To seal a person or thing is to set a mark upon it for a specific purpose. The term is frequently employed in the Scriptures to express the operations of grace, by which

believers are separated from the world and made meet for heaven. 2. The agents of it. "We." The work of salvation is of Christ from first to last. 3. The subjects of it. "Servants of God," that is, true believers, those who serve God by obeying His commands and seeking His glory. They are sealed to serve Him here and to enjoy Him hereafter. 4. Visibility of it. "In their foreheads." 5. The chief design of it. That believers should not be "hurt" by the fearful calamities that are predicted in the sixth seal, as speedily to fall upon the wicked. God marks them as His special property; and being thus sealed, they live under the special protection of His providence while here, and will meet with an effectual shelter in the great day of His wrath. 6. The extent of it. The question was once put to Christ, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" Here the question receives an answer which shows that there will be many, so that in this, as well as in all other things, Christ will have the pre-eminence. (1) We have a specific number. Twelve thousand out of each tribe were sealed, making one hundred and forty-four thousand in the whole, which in prophetic language signifies completion and perfection. (2) We have a general number. The whole assembly of the redeemed, including Jews and Gentiles, rises in splendid array to the apostle's view. 7. The ultimate glory of it. "They stand before the throne, and before the Lamb."

(Wm. Gregory.) *God's government of the world*:—I. GOD EMPLOYS THE HIGHEST ORDER OF CELESTIAL INTELLIGENCES IN THE CONDUCT OF HIS GOVERNMENT. Nowhere throughout immensity does He appear to act directly on matter and mind at all (Hos. ii. 21, 22). The mere scientist accounts for the various objects and phenomena of the material world by what he calls blind forces or natural laws; I prefer ascribing all under God to the "angels standing on the four corners," &c. A wonderful view of the universe, truly, we have here. True, a telescope opens to my vision world upon world and system upon system, until imagination reels at the prospect, and my spirit seems crushed with a sense of its own insignificance; but in these words I have a telescope by which I see the wide fields of air, the rolling planets, the minute and the vast, the proximate and the remote peopled and working, reaching in regular gradation from my little being up to the ineffable throne, and all under God. II. GOD, IN EMPLOYING THESE AGENCIES, ENJOINS ON THEM A SPECIAL REGARD FOR THE INTERESTS OF REDEEMED MEN IN THE WORLD (vers. 2, 3).

1. There is some method by which angels can aid man. 2. Man's salvation is of paramount importance. 3. Service to the lowest is consonant with the highest greatness. 4. Man's obligation is to seek the spiritual good of his fellows. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *A sketch of an impending judgment*:—I. THE WORLD EXPOSED TO JUDGMENT. Winds are the symbols of judgment (Jer. xlix. 36, 37; Dan. vii. 2). The four winds indicate the universality of the judgment. Conscience, Providence, and the Bible all point to this universal judgment. II. THE JUDGMENT ENTRUSTED TO ANGELS. Angels are the ministers of God. He employs them to execute His judgments. 1. They appeared amidst the terrors of Mount Sinai (Deut. xxxiii. 2). 2. They appeared with our Saviour in the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. xxiv. 30, 31). 3. Angels have been frequently engaged in executing Divine judgment on this earth (Exod. xii. 22; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17; 2 Kings xix. 35). 4. Angels are represented as active in the final day of retribution (Matt. xiii. 39, 41, xxv. 31; 1 Thess. iv. 16). The Eternal Judge then, as now, will work through others. III. THE ANGELS RESTRAINED BY A MEDIATOR. Who is this angel? Who is represented in this particular case I know not. But I know that the Great Angel of the Covenant answers well this description. He came from the orient depths of glory with Divine credentials and with great earnestness, in order to stay the angels of retribution from executing their terrible commission. Our great Redeemer holds back the hand of the destroying angel, and the burden of His intercession is, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea," &c. To Christ we owe the postponement of the judgment. IV. THE MEDIATOR RESTRAINING BECAUSE HIS WORK IS UNFINISHED.

1. There are men who are yet to receive the seal of God. 2. That the judgment is delayed until the number of the sealed ones is completed. (Homilist.) *The seal of the living God*.—*The angel's seal, set upon God's faithful servants, when hurtful winds are blowing in the Church militant*:—I. NOTICE SOME OF THOSE PERNICIOUS WINDS WHEREWITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS INFESTED WHILE HERE IN A MILITANT STATE. 1. There is the wind of open violence, persecution, and bloodshed. 2. Sometimes, and very frequently, the hurtful wind of error in doctrine is suffered to blow in the barn or field of the visible Church. 3. Another hurtful wind is the wind of strong delusions as to everlasting soul concerns; and this is consequential unto the former. 4. There is the wind of temptation that blows in the visible

Church. This was a wind that blew hard on the glorious Head and Captain of our salvation (Matt. iv.). 5. Another hurtful wind is the wind of profanity and open ungodliness. 6. All these winds are commonly followed with the winds of desolating judgments, such as sword, famine, and pestilence, whereby the wicked are turned off the stage of time into a miserable eternity. II. INQUIRE WHO ARE THOSE SERVANTS OF GOD FOR WHOSE SAKE THE HURTFUL WINDS ARE RESTRAINED, THAT PROVISION MAY BE MADE FOR THEIR SAFETY WHEN THEY DO ACTUALLY BLOW. 1. The servants of God are such as "keep the commandments of God," *i.e.*—(1) They are holy persons; the "sanctified and preserved in Christ Jesus." Or—(2) As Durham observes, they "keep the commandments of God," it is to be understood of a keeping the laws, ordinances, and institutions of Christ, in opposition to a set of men in the Antichristian Church, who, through their traditions, were making void the commandments of God. 2. The faithful servants of God are said to be such as "have the testimony of Jesus." By the testimony of Jesus we are to understand the gospel of Christ, or the doctrine of faith in its purity, which only is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. i. 16). III. SPEAK A LITTLE OF THE SEAL THAT IS SET UPON THE SERVANTS OF GOD. 1. Who is He that seals them? It is Christ, the Great Angel that hath the seal of the living God. 2. What is implied in the sealing them? (1) That He is their great owner and proprietor; for a man seals his own goods, that it may be known they are his. (2) A seal is for distinction, to distinguish one man's goods from another. (3) A seal is for confirmation. The king's seal appended unto a charter establishes and confirms it. (4) A seal is sometimes for secrecy. We read of a book (chap. v. 1) which was sealed with seven seals because of the great secrets and hid mysteries contained in it. And so it may import that God's people are His hidden ones, and that His secrets are imparted to them, and not to others. (5) A seal is a badge of honour, love, and esteem. And so it implies that His servants are honourable persons, precious in His sight (Isa. xliii. 4). (6) A seal is for custody and preservation. So the saints and servants of God, they are "the preserved in Christ Jesus, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 3. When and how are they sealed? (1) From all eternity they were sealed with His electing and everlasting love. (2) In their conversion and effectual calling they are sealed in their own persons with the image of the second Adam. (3) They have a seal of blood set upon them in their redemption and justification; for, as you see (ver. 14 of this chapter), "they have their garments washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." (4) They have the seal of the Spirit of promise set upon them (Eph. i. 13). 4. But why are they said to be sealed in their foreheads? This may import two things. (1) Their visible profession of Christ and their open owning of the Lord, and His way and cause in the time of the greatest opposition, when error and delusion and persecution was most rampant in the visible Church. (2) Their being marked or sealed in the forehead implies that, in the time of common calamity, God will make such a visible difference between His own faithful servants and others, that he that runs may read, according to that (Mal. iii. 18). IV. INQUIRE INTO THE REASONS WHY CHRIST, THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT, WILL HAVE HIS SERVANTS MARKED IN THEIR FOREHEADS WHEN THE WINDS ARE TO BE LET BLOW? 1. In so many words He will have them sealed, because they are His Father's gift, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me," and for the Father's sake that gave them, He will have them sealed. 2. Because He hath bought them at a dear rate, even with the price of His precious blood, not with silver, or gold, or such corruptible things, &c. 3. He seals them because they believe in Him (Eph. i. 13). "After that ye believed, ye were sealed," &c. 4. He seals them because they love Him, so as to mourn for injury done Him (Ezek. ix. 4). 5. He seals them because they are His faithful witnesses, that confess Him when others deny Him. 6. He seals them that they may not suffer hurt by the destroying winds that blow in the visible Church. They keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus; and therefore He will keep them in the hour of temptation, according to the promise (Psa. xci. 3, 7). (*E. Erskine, D.D.*) *Pent-up judgment*:—I. PENT-UP JUDGMENT. Righteousness produces judgment, and grace restrains it. Grace does not nullify or cancel judgment; it simply suspends it. The history of our earth is one of suspended judgment. Of this judgment, we may say that it is—1. Slow. When it comes, it comes swiftly; but meanwhile it is not rash, nor precipitate. This slowness often deludes the sinner. 2. Silent. It makes no sign. The fermenting elements are noiseless. There are often no thunder-clouds, but a calm, blue sky. 3. Sure. It will not miss its mark, nor mistake its victim, nor forget its time. Its slowness

and silence contribute to its certainty. 4. Terrible. The blow, when it comes, is overwhelming. The pent-up torrent, when it breaks its barrier, carries all before it. So God's vengeance is infinitely terrible. Who can stand before it? II. THE SEALING. In the chapter before us it is a Jewish multitude that is specially named as sealed; but as in ver. 3 it is the "servants of God" that are said to be sealed, we may infer that by that expression both Gentile and Jew are meant. The sealing seems (as in Ezek. ix.) to intimate exemption from the earthly judgments of a particular time. I do not dwell on this further than to point out God's care for His own in days of trouble—as in Noah's days, in Lot's days, in Ezekiel's days, in the time of Jerusalem's great siege. I would remind you of the ninety-first Psalm also, which is specially written for evil days. III. THE INGATHERING. It is not simply for temporal protection that God stays His judgments, but for salvation. A time of pent-up judgment is a time of ingathering. A time of judgment may also be so, but a time of suspended judgment still more so. For at such a time God is in earnest—in earnest in His grace, in earnest in His righteousness. His long-suffering is salvation; His patience is life eternal. He pities to the last. Judgment is His strange work. At such a time the gospel comes with peculiar power. (H. Bonar, D.D.) *The sealing of the elect*:—There is here revealed to us a Divine idea, and a Divine law of action, which is now advancing with perpetual energy, past, present, and to come. I. GOD HAS A FOREKNOWN NUMBER WHOM HE WILL GATHER OUT UNTO HIMSELF. The whole of the new creation sprung from, and surrounding, the second Adam in the kingdom of life eternal; the mystical Person of Christ, both the Head and the Body, all perfected by that which "every joint supplieth"; the true and eternal Vine, complete in all its symmetry from root to spray; the heavenly court, compassed about with ranks of angelic hosts; the order of patriarchs, and the multitude of saints, ascending to the Incarnate Son: all this Divine and glorious mystery of miraculous love and power stands in the foreknowledge of the Eternal, full, perfect, and accomplished. II. THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD WILL RUN ON UNTIL THIS FOREKNOWN NUMBER SHALL BE GATHERED IN. All things are for the elect's sake. What is the history of the world but a history of man's warfare against God? of our provocation, and of His patience? III. EVEN NOW, WHILE JUDGMENT IS STAYED, THE CHURCH IN THE MIDST OF US IS SEALING GOD'S ELECT. The angel ascending from the east is a type of the ministry of angels and men knit together in one order of grace, to gather out the heirs of salvation. The visible polity of the Church, its stately ritual and public solemnities, its fasts and feasts, its chants and litanies, its missions and preachings, all the public order and movement which meets the eye and ear—all this is as the "net let down into the sea, which taketh of every kind, both good and bad." But this is not the sealing of the elect. It is an inner work of grace, a choosing from among the chosen, a preparation for that day, when, upon the eternal shore, the angels "shall gather the good into vessels, and cast the bad away." 1. The ultimate and true election of God is not collective but several, not of bodies but of persons. Born alone, alone we must live; alone repent, pray, fast, watch, persevere, and die; each one for himself "work out his own salvation," and make his "calling and election sure." 2. This mystery of election, as it is personal, so it is strictly consistent with our personal probation. God made man free, and elects him to and in the exercise of freedom, will, and power. And what is this seal of the living God, but the image of God renewed in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost; the likeness and the mind of Christ stamped upon us by a perfect regeneration; the inward reality of a saintly spirit wrought in us, either by a life of steadfast obedience or by a true repentance, by a persevering grace or by a perfect conversion? IV. LET US TRY OURSELVES BY SOME PLAIN QUESTIONS OF SELF-EXAMINATION. 1. What is our character? By this we mean the clear, conscious, and definite shape and direction which has been given to our whole spiritual nature. Surely it is no hard thing to find out whether we are living in any known sin or not; whether we are striving against temptation or not; whether we have mastery over our faults or our faults over us; whether we desire the love of God or not; whether sin is to us a sorrow, and the very thought of holiness a delight; whether we are living for this world or for the next. 2. If we have not this higher character, what are our tendencies? Is sin losing hold, and the spirit of sanctity gaining power over us? Are our temptations weaker, and we stronger; our faults fewer, and our repentance deeper? 3. What is our habitual intention? The true self of sincere minds is that which speaks and aspires in their better moments. The lower level on which they move at other times is the way of their infirmity. As the

resistance of the atmosphere stays the keenest arrow's flight, and bends it to earth again, so the purest and directest intention is slackened by the gross thick airs of our daily life. Not to sink into a slower, earthlier motion is the portion of those who are lifted into a higher and heavenlier sphere, where the actings of the soul have nothing to resist them. In heaven "they rest not day nor night"; but on earth the most unresting intention is overcome by weakness and weariness at last. It cannot always be conscious and actual; but that does not take away from its true and habitual reality. Let this, then, be your continual endeavour, to uphold and to prolong these higher intentions. Quicken and strengthen them by a life of prayer, by meditation, by habitual communion, by self-examination, by confession; by exercises of the heart, and by acts of faith, hope, and love. (*Archdeacon Manning*.)

All-saints' day:—First, then, man being compassed with a cloud of witnesses of his own infirmities, and the manifold afflictions of this life, had need of some light to show him the right way, and some strength to enable him to walk safely in it. And this light and strength is here proposed in the assistance of an angel. Which being first understood of angels in general, affords a great measure of comfort to us, because the angels are faithful and diligent attendants upon all our steps. But our security of deliverance is in a safer and a stronger hand than this; not in these ministerial and missive angels only, but in His that sends them, yea, in His that made them. This angel, which does so much for God's saints, is by many expositors taken to be our Saviour Christ Himself. And will any man doubt of performance of conditions in Him? Will any man look for better security than Him who puts two, and two such, into the band, Christ and Jesus: an anointed King, able, an actual Saviour, willing to discharge not His, but our debt? This security, then, for our deliverance and protection, we have in this angel in our text, "I saw an angel," as this Angel is Christ; but yet we have also another security, more immediate and more applicable to us. Besides this all-sufficiency of the Angel of the Covenant, Christ Jesus, we have for our security, in this text, "I saw an angel," the servants of Christ too. This angel is indeed the whole frame and hierarchy of the Christian Church. So, then, to let go none of our assistants, our safety is in the Angel of the Covenant, Christ Jesus, radically, fundamentally, meritoriously. It is in the ministry of the angels of heaven invisibly; but it is in the Church of God, and in the power of His ministers there, manifestly, sensibly, discernibly. This addition is intended for a particular addition to our comfort; it is a particular endowment, or enlargement, of strength and power in this angel, that he comes from the east. Those angels which have had their sunset—their fall—they came from the east. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?" He had his begetting, his creation, in the east, in the light, and there might have stayed for any necessity of falling that God laid upon him. Take the angel of the text to be the Angel of the Covenant, Christ Jesus, and His name is The East. Every way the gospel is an angel of the east. But this is that which we take to be principally intended in it, that, as the east is the fountain of light, so all our illumination is to be taken from the gospel. If thou suffer thy soul to set in a dark cloud of ignorance of God's providence, or in a darker of diffidence of His performance towards thee, this is a turning to the west, and all these are perverse and awry. But turn to the east and to the angel that comes from thence, the ministry of the gospel of Christ Jesus in His Church. It is true thou mayest find some dark places in the Scriptures, yet fix thyself upon this angel of the east, the preaching of the Word, the ordinance of God, and thine understanding shall be enlightened, and thy belief established, and thy conscience unburthened. Our angel comes from the east, a denotation of splendour, an illustration of understanding and conscience, and there is more—he comes ascending. "I saw an angel ascend from the east," that is, still growing more clear and more powerful upon us (1 Sam. xxviii. 13). Take the angel to be Christ, and then His ascension is intended. But as this angel is the ministry of the gospel, God gave it a glorious ascent in the primitive Church, when as this sun ascended quickly beyond the reach of heretics and persecutors. Now to give way to this ascent of this angel in thyself, make the way smooth, find thou a growth of the gospel in thy faith, and let us find it in thy life. If thou find it not ascending it descends. If thou live not by it nothing can redeem thee, thou diest by it. "Of the living God." The gods of the nations are all dead gods: either such gods as never had life—stones, and gold and silver—or such gods at best as were never gods until they were dead, for men that had benefited the world in any general invention, or otherwise, were made gods after their deaths, which was a miserable deification. If we seek this

seal in the great Angel, the Angel of the Covenant, Christ Jesus: it is true He hath it, for "the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son." Christ, as the Son of Man, executes a judgment, and hath a power, which He hath not but by gift, by commission, by virtue of this seal, from His Father. The servants of God being sealed in their foreheads in the sacrament of baptism, when they are received into the care of the Church, all those means which God hath provided for His servants, in His Church, to resist afflictions and temptations, are intended to be conferred upon them in that seal. This sealing of them is a communicating to them all those assistances of the Christian Church. Then they have a way of prevention of sin, by hearing; a way to absolution, by confession; a way to reconciliation, by a worthy receiving the body and blood of Christ Jesus. And these helps of the Christian Church thus conferred in baptism, keep open still, if these be rightly used, that other seal, the seal of the Spirit (Eph. i. 13; 2 Cor. i. 22). (*John Donne, D.D.*)

The servants of our God.—The best service:—I. WE OUGHT TO BE THE ACTIVE SERVANTS OF OUR GOD. It is necessary for us to pray, and if we pray aright, it will make us active in going about doing good. Do not let us enter into the business of life solely on our own account; let us be servants in all we do on God's account. How earnestly most business men seek opportunities of doing anything and everything to increase their trade and make it prosperous. Why do not we as Christians be equally earnest in attracting people to our churches and chapels? We may be co-workers with God. Your holy, charitable life and manners may melt the opposition of men who hate goodness and truth. II. Then let us further be CONSISTENT servants of our God. The world watches us, waiting to see whether we are true or not. Don't be pious in singing hymns, and impious in something else. Be consistent. If you have faults, don't rest until you get rid of them. Grow daily in grace, piety, and religion, like healthy plants, which grow in beauty day by day. III. Be a FREE servant of our God. Don't let any bad habits make you their prisoner. It is said that habit is second nature; and man is a bundle of habits. You know that when you walk across a field for the first time you make scarcely any impression on the grass. But if you go several times a day for a year you will make a beaten path. So one sin may not do you much injury, but it is the beginning of many. One drop of water from yonder hill soon dries up, but if it be followed by fresh drops every moment, by and by it scoops out a way through the hardest rocks, and becomes a rapid, gurgling stream, which dashes from stone to stone until it reaches the broad river. So these bad habits grow upon us and enslave us. "Blessed is he that overcometh." The Lord God has promised that if any one ask Him, He will send His Holy Spirit into that man's heart, and deliver him from all his bad habits. IV. Be God's servants, showing forth the BEAUTY OF HOLINESS. Young man, you may not possess a titled name, but you may make yourself the embodiment of honour. You may not possess great wealth, but you may be known as one of the upright of the earth. When a beautiful woman dies, nobody mourns her; but when a woman who is beautiful in soul passes away, angels welcome her to glory and good men weep for her. Be beautiful in life. (*W. Birch.*)

Vers. 4-8. The number of them which were sealed.—The sealing:—I. WHO, THEN, ARE THESE 144,000 SEALED ONES? II. THE NATURE OF THE SEALING OF WHICH THESE 144,000 ARE THE SUBJECTS. 1. It is manifest that the transaction takes place on earth, and in the case of people contemporaneously living in the flesh. 2. This sealing involved the impartation of a conspicuous and observable mark. 3. It is something Divine. The seal with which the sealing is done is "a seal of the living God." It so pledges Him, and to Him, that it must be regarded as His own act. 4. The office of this sealing is in the hands of an angel, who comes forth from the sun-rising. He is a high officer from God. He carries a seal of the miracle-working God, and he gives commands to the angels of judgment. Many take him to be the Lord Jesus Himself. There is much to sustain this view. 5. This sealing was, moreover, a moral, and not a mere arbitrary or external thing. Those who receive it are described as "the servants of our God," as contradistinguished from other classes of men. And from what is said of them in the fourteenth chapter they are very eminently God's servants. It is the common law of the Divine proceedings that His special honours are never otherwise conferred than in connection with special dutifulness and fidelity under very special trials and difficulties. 6. And from this we are enabled to get a still deeper glance into the nature of this peculiar sealing. The seal of God is the Spirit of God,

particularly in His more unusual gifts. 7. Very various and diverse: hence would also be the outward manifestations of this mark. It would show itself in the doctrines professed by the sealed ones, in the power with which they announce and defend them, in a particularly holy, prayerful, and self-denying life, in a bravery and fearlessness before gainsayers which no earthly powers can daunt, and in a wisdom and heavenliness of demeanour. III. THE INTENT AND EFFECT OF THIS MARVELLOUS SEALING. It is agreed on all hands that it is a merciful and gracious act. Its first effect is to stay the blasts of judgment, and to produce a lull in the work of vengeance. So it is ever. God's people are the salt of the earth. But for them, and God's gracious purposes toward them, judgment and ruin would instantly break over the globe. Governments stand, society exists, the waters flow, the trees live, the sea retains its salubrity, the grasses grow upon the earth, and the death-blasts of the destroying angels are restrained, only because the Lord is engaged taking out from among the nations a people for His name, the number of which must first be made up. But this sealing was more particularly for the comfort, assurance, and security of the sealed ones themselves. As the gift of the Holy Ghost certified and assured the apostles of the Divinity of the cause they had espoused, of their acceptance as God's acknowledged ambassadors; so this sealing with the seal of the living God certified and assured these 144,000 of the unmistakable character of their faith, of their election as a firstfruits of incoming new administrations, and guaranteed unto them not only security amid the blasts of heightening judgment upon earth, but also a peculiar and blessed portion with Jesus in His glory. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *All saints:—*I. THE NUMBER OF THE BLESSED. The hundred and forty and four thousand are the twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes; and these mystic figures, though they may mean much else, seem at least to represent a certain perfect number contemplated by God. Let it be a mystery, this apparent limitation of the number of the elect! let God's foreknowledge and man's freewill defy our explanation, and be confused in our attempt to see the relation of number to Him who is infinite!—yet the believer feels a sensation of repose in the thought that the work answers to the design, and that the number of the redeemed is perfect according to the will of God. In all our anticipations of the result of labour for God, this faith must rule our hearts, viz., that the Divine love will not be disappointed. Care must be had for the few, that they may lack nothing which the Church can give. II. THERE IS A GREAT MULTITUDE. There are few minds that are not swayed by a comparison of numbers. The multitude who agree to forget God charm us with the thought of impunity, if we be no worse than they; the difficulty of holy living is increased by its singularity. Is not one blessing, which we derive from a contemplation of the angels, the thought of support which the obedience of their "innumerable company" lends to cheer the hearts of those who on earth are fighting against numbers? III. THEIR HAPPINESS. IV. THERE IS A REASON WHY EVEN CHRISTIANS HESITATE TO CALL A MAN HAPPY TILL HE IS DEAD, not because he may fall into misfortune, but into sin. As long as life lasts, so long lasts temptation. Exhaustion of body, or extremity of pain, or influence of opiates, or dreadful memory of early sins, exercises at times a desperate tyranny over the quiet of the closing day. Therefore with such dangers even to the last, well may we hold our breath and call no man happy till he be dead. V. THERE IS IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE SCARCELY A SORER TRIAL THAN DOUBT. And not only in matters of speculation and doubt, but in every common incident of daily life, let us force ourselves to imagine what our departed friends now feel, not what they once felt. VI. A CONTEMPLATION OF THE DEAD WILL RELIEVE US OF THE PAINFUL THOUGHT THAT DEATH CUTS SHORT THE WORK OF LIFE. The life beyond the grave has been beautifully compared to the heavens at night. Think how, at the creation of day and night, Adam must have marvelled to see the sun withdraw; how dread and awful must have been the first darkness veiling from his eyes a world of perfect beauty; what a blank it must have appeared in his sight! But greater far was his amazement when stars broke out, and one by one lit up the hollow vaults of heaven, and the whole spaces of the air were jewelled with bright orbs, and countless worlds like unto his own were presented to his eyes! If the sun by day can so blind us, and the darkness of nightfall can reveal so many worlds, why may not death not only compensate a man for the loss of life, but open to his clearer vision regions of untraversed light which it had not entered into his heart to conceive? VII. REMEMBER ABOVE ALL THINGS THAT THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WE SPEAK OF DEPENDS NOT ON THEMSELVES. God Himself is their light and life and their exceeding

great reward; their eyes rest on Him; salvation is His free gift. (*Canon Furse.*)

Vers. 9-17. A great multitude, which no man could number.—*The saints in heaven*.—I. WHAT JOHN SAW AND HEARD. 1. A great multitude of all nations. When John was on earth he saw but few believers. The Church was like a lily in a field of thorns—lambs in the midst of wolves; but now quite different—thorns are plucked away—the lilies innumerable. Every country had its representatives there—some saved out of every land. All were like Christ, and yet all retained their different peculiarities. 2. Their position. They stood before the throne; yea, nearer than the angels, for they stood round about. This marks their complete righteousness. In Christ they stand, not in themselves. Nearer than angels; the angels have only creature-righteousness—these have on Creator righteousness. If you are ever to be near God, you may come freely to Him now. Why keep so far away? 3. Their dress—white robes and palms. They have all the same dress, there is no difference. It is the garment of Christ. Awakened persons are sometimes led to cry, “O that I had never sinned!” but here is something better than if you had never sinned. 4. Their song. The substance of it. Salvation. They give God all the glory. The effect of it: it stirs up the hearts of the angels (vers. 11, 12). How do you feel when you hear of others being saved and brought nearer to God than you? Do you envy and hate them, or do you fall down and praise God for it? II. THEIR PAST HISTORY. Two particulars are given. Each had a different history; still in these two they were alike. 1. They had washed their robes. You think to go to heaven by your own decency, innocency, attention to duties. Well, you would be the only such one there: all are washed in blood. 2. They came out of great tribulation. Every one that gets to the throne must put their foot upon the thorn. The way to the crown is by the Cross. We must taste the gall if we are to taste the glory. Go round every one in glory; every one has a different story, yet every one has a tale of suffering. One was persecuted in his family, by his friends and companions; another was visited by sore pains and humbling disease, neglected by the world; another was bereaved of children. Mark, all are brought out of them. It was a dark cloud, but it passed away: the water was deep, but they have reached the other side. Not one of them blames God for the road He led them—“Salvation” is their only cry. III. FUTURE HISTORY. 1. Immediate service of God. Here we are allowed to spend much of our time in our worldly callings. We shall spend eternity in loving God, in adoring, admiring, and praising God. We should spend much of our present time in this. 2. Not in the wilderness any more. At present we are like a flock in the wilderness, our soul often hungry, and thirsty, and sorely tried. Learn to glorify Him in the fires, to sing in the wilderness. This is the only world where you can give God that glory. 3. Father, Son, and Spirit will bless us. (*R. M. McCheyne.*) *Humanity in heaven*.—I. HUMANITY IN HEAVEN FORM ONE VAST COMMUNITY. This fact implies—1. The marvellous success of the gospel. 2. The impartiality of the gospel. 3. The socialising power of the gospel. II. HUMANITY IN HEAVEN ARE DISTINGUISHED IN POSITION. “Stood before the throne.” This indicates—1. The highest service. 2. The highest honour. 3. The highest integrity. III. HUMANITY IN HEAVEN ARE GLORIOUS IN APPEARANCE. 1. Perfectly sinless. “White robes.” 2. Completely triumphant. “Palms.” IV. HUMANITY IN HEAVEN ARE DELIGHTFUL IN EMPLOYMENT. Singing is worship in its perfect form. The song is—1. Redemptive in its theme. 2. Grateful in its purpose. (1) To God as the author of salvation. (2) To the Redeemer as the medium of salvation. 3. Enthusiastic in its spirit. 4. Contagious in its effect. V. HUMANITY IN HEAVEN ARE PERFECT IN BLISS. 1. Freedom from all evil. (1) No more sin. (2) No more suffering. (3) No more sorrow. 2. Enjoyment of all good. (1) Divine service. (2) Divine fellowship. (3) Divine care. (*B. D. Johns.*) *The saints in heaven*.—There is no good reason why this graphic picture of the heavenly land should be in our hands except for some practical purpose. The Bible is a practical book. The Bible comes to put the seen where it belongs, and give the unseen a chance to get hold of us, lest, in wilful near-sightedness, we miss altogether the eternal realities with which lies our chief concern. Linger in the vestibule we must for a time, but how? With faces averted from the cathedral entrance, indifferent to what lies beyond, or intent upon the grander thing that lies before us, for whose revelation we wait with expectant heart? In this picture—(1) Heaven is nothing if it be not realistic. It has a local habitation as well as a name. So had it to all Bible-men of faith. How

real to them ! (2) Again, what catholicity in heaven ! Of the covenant mercies of the Jewish tabernacle it was hard for a Gentile to get a glimpse ; to sit down as one of the true Israel was his only as by reluctant concession to an alien. But this exclusiveness lingers not even to cast a shadow. No barrier of race nor of high or low, of early or late, intervenes to hinder that they come into that high fellowship of God-like catholicity. (3) But, though so catholic, there is a discrimination of character which makes them one, which also gives to heaven an air of exclusiveness. They are white-robed, all of them, and not one robe made white by any process save one. The fact and the manner of it are both significant. There are no notes of discord in the song they sing—no praises but of One and the efficacy of His atoning blood. Rejecting Christ as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, be it by Jew or Gentile, is turning away from Him who opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens. It is to reject the only means of blanching character to snowy whiteness, the only condition of sin's forgiveness. (4) Note the contrasts to their former condition. (*H. C. Haydn, D.D.*) *The human population in heaven* :—I. ITS NUMBERS ARE TOO GREAT FOR CALCULATION. 1. A reproof to all sectarianism. 2. An encouragement to all Christly work. 3. A response to all philanthropic desires. 4. An attestation of benevolent Creatorship. II. ITS VARIETY INCLUDES ALL THE RACES OF MANKIND. 1. Our highest aim should be to become true men. 2. Our highest love should be for men. III. ITS GLORIOUSNESS TRANSCENDS ALL DESCRIPTION. 1. Their position. 2. Their attire. 3. Their blessed rest. IV. ITS ENGAGEMENTS ARE RAPTURES IN DEVOTION. "Salvation" includes restoration from ignorance to true knowledge, from impurity to holiness, from bondage to soul liberty, from selfishness to benevolence, from materialism to genuine spirituality, from the reign of wrong to the reign of right. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The redeemed in glory* :—I. THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN ARE EXCEEDINGLY NUMEROUS. 1. We might infer from some passages of Scripture that very few persons would be saved. 2. We might infer from the present aspect of society that very few persons would be saved. II. THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN ARE GREATLY DIVERSIFIED. 1. The society of heaven will be greatly diversified. From all ranks and conditions in life. 2. The service of heaven will be greatly diversified. III. THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN ARE HIGHLY EXALTED. 1. They have access to the throne of God. 2. They have fellowship with the Lamb of God. IV. THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN ARE PERFECTLY HAPPY. 1. Perfectly holy. 2. Perfectly safe. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *The redeemed in heaven* :—I. THE GREAT NUMBER OF THE REDEEMED. It is in the highest degree probable that the number of the redeemed will finally exceed the number of the lost. For consider—1. The vast number of children that die. 2. The predictions of Scripture, that a time is coming when the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. 3. Jesus Christ is represented as ultimately to be a conqueror. II. THE EXTENSIVE VARIETY OF THE REDEEMED. Every geographical barrier which now separates people from people will be swept away ; every national antipathy will be extinguished, and every denominational peculiarity will be at an end. III. THE BEAUTIFUL APPEARANCE OF THE REDEEMED. The white robe is an emblem of the moral purity which characterises the redeemed in heaven. Faith in Christ is the grand and the only specific for moral purification. Its efficacy is the same for men of all generations and of all climes. IV. THE DELIGHTFUL SONG OF THE REDEEMED. The glories of God, as displayed in the works of His hand, will furnish the occasion of growing wonder and delight. Then, too, we believe that mysteries of Providence will be disclosed. And yet, glorious as will be the discoveries that God will afford of His works in creation, and of His ways in providence, it will still be "salvation" that will be the keynote of rejoicing to the Church triumphant. And who will be the objects of their praise ? God and the Lamb. (*Charles Hargreaves.*) *The great multitude* :—The vision of pent-up judgment begins this chapter ; then the sealing and the ingathering. Our text is the result of the ingathering, as seen in heaven. I. THE NUMBERS. "A great multitude, which no man could number." The three thousand at Pentecost were a large number, but this is greater. The hundreds and thousands, both in Judea and throughout the Gentile world, at Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Philippi, and other places, were specimens of the great ingathering ; but here we have the aggregate, the summing-up of all. Like Israel, they cannot be numbered for multitude ; they are like the stars of heaven, or the sand which is by the sea-shore. II. THE NATIONALITIES. Every people furnishes its quota to this great assembly ; every tribe has its representatives here ; every region, every colour, every language, every

kingdom, every people, every age and century. It is the general assembly and Church of the first-born. Here all nationalities meet in one great heavenly nationality, without jealousy or distrust; all one in Him who redeemed them by His blood.

III. THE POSTURE. "Standing before the throne, and before the Lamb." They "stand." It is the posture of triumph and honour; "having done all, they stand" (Eph. vi. 13). Not bowed down, nor kneeling, nor prostrate, their erect posture indicates the high position to which they have been brought; and especially is this honour apparent when we see them standing "before the throne, and before the Lamb," in the very presence of the King.

IV. THE RAIMENT. They are "clothed with white robes." 1. It is the raiment of heaven (Mark xvi. 5; John xx. 12; Acts i. 12). 2. It is the raiment of purity and perfection. 3. It is the raiment of triumph. It is given to him that overcometh (chap. iii. 5). 4. It is the festal dress. At the marriage-supper this is the raiment provided; the bride sits down at the table in the King's pavilion "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" (chap. xix. 8).

V. THE BADGE. They had "palms in their hands." The palm is the symbol of gladness and of victory. Here it is specially used in reference to the feast of tabernacles, the gladdest of all Israel's festivals (Lev. xxiii. 40). The true feast of tabernacles, the memorial of our desert sojourn and earthly pilgrimage ended for ever, the saints shall celebrate in the New Jerusalem. The days of their mourning shall be ended; their everlasting joy begun.

VI. THE SHOUT. They "cry with a loud voice, Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb." (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *What they wear and do in heaven*:—I. HOW SHALL I BEGIN BY TELLING YOU OF THE NUMBER OF THOSE IN HEAVEN? One of the most impressive things I have looked upon is an army. Standing upon a hillside you see forty thousand or fifty thousand men pass along. You can hardly imagine the impression if you have not actually felt it.

II. THEIR ANTECEDENTS—"of all nations, and kindreds and tongues." Some of them spoke Scotch, Irish, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Tamil, Burmese. I suppose, in the great throng around the throne, it will not be difficult to tell from what part of the earth they came. In this world men prefer different kinds of government. The United States want a Republic. The British Government needs to be a Constitutional Monarchy. Austria wants Absolutism; but when they come up from earth, they will prefer one great monarchy—King Jesus ruler over it.

III. THE DRESS OF THOSE IN HEAVEN. It is white! In this world we had sometimes to have on working-day apparel. Bright and lustrous garments would be ridiculously out of place sweltering amid forges, or mixing paints, or plastering ceilings, or binding books. When all toil on earth is past, and there is no more drudgery, and no more weariness, we shall stand before the throne robed in white. On earth we sometimes had to wear mourning apparel—black scarf for the arm, black veil for the face, black gloves for the hands, black band for the hat. But when these bereavements have all passed and no more sorrow to suffer, we shall put off this mourning and be robed in white.

IV. THE SYMBOLS THEY CARRY. V. THE SONG THEY SING. In this world we have secular songs, nursery songs, boatmen's songs, harvest songs, sentimental songs; but in heaven we will have taste for only one song, and that will be the song of salvation from an eternal death to an eternal heaven, through the blood of the Lamb that was slain. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Heaven*:—I. THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD IN THEIR STATION ABOVE: brought not merely to the same world in which their Saviour dwells, to the same kingdom, to its metropolis, to the palace, to the Court, but into the very presence chamber of the King, and stationed before His throne. Not that throne of grace before which on earth they bowed in penitence, brokenness of heart will then for ever pass away; not the throne of judgment around which they will gather at the last day, they will have passed from that; but the throne of glory—to behold God "face to face"—to "see Him as He is"—not merely by an intellectual apprehension, but by the eyes of the glorified body. They "stood before the throne"; a word importing holy confidence, consciousness that they are welcome.

II. THE APPEARANCE OF THIS MULTITUDE. 1. Clad in "white robes": importing their complete justification and acceptance with God. We have only to look at the scene before us to see the indispensable necessity of the Divinity of Christ, to constitute the efficacy of the atonement. These two stand or fall together. If there be an atonement for sin, it must of necessity make way for as clear a display of Divine justice as well as mercy, in the salvation of the redeemed, as if they had suffered the penalty of their transgressions in their own proper person, and had sunk under their guilt down to the lowest hell. There must be an equivalent by the atonement, whatever it be. I do not mean a money

equivalent; but there must be a moral equivalent. It would be no atonement if a way were not made for the manifestation of Divine justice, as clear and as impressive as it would have been if the whole redeemed had sunk under the chains of their transgressions. Look, then, to the redeemed, and think of countless myriads washed in the blood of the Lamb; and who must that Lamb be but, in another view of His nature, the Son of God, equal with the Father? But the expression imports another thing with respect to the redeemed: their entire sanctification. Their robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb; their sanctification is effected by the work of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is granted through the mediation of Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit uses as the means of our sanctification the great truths presented in the atoning sacrifice of the Cross; and therefore our sanctification is effected by the blood of Christ, as well as our justification. 2. "Palms in their hands." Heaven will be the sweeter for the power of contrast. We, in the enjoyment of victory, shall think of the conflict. III. THE NUMBER—"a multitude which no man can number." Add these things together—the fruits of the Father's eternal love, of the Son's redeeming work, and the Spirit's sanctification; think of the answer of the prayers of the righteous in every age who have wrestled with God for the outpouring of His Spirit: and then say whether the multitude will not be greater than can be numbered. IV. THEIR VARIETY—"of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Various are the systems of Church polity, and the rites and the ceremonies and the usages, that distinguish and divide Christians now; and, alas! not merely for poor human nature, but for poor renewed nature—the party spirit, the bitterness, the strife, to which these differences give rise! But one heaven shall contain them all. Why cannot we be more one now since we shall certainly be one hereafter? V. THEIR OCCUPATION. They are "before the throne." They are presented to us in an act of praise. The adoration of God, the service of God, fellowship with God, will be the felicity of the redeemed. We must never let drop that idea. We are to see God; "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." We shall see God in Christ. Such appears to be our eternal occupation, mingled with the other occupations in which we engage. Just look at the theme of their praise—"salvation." If salvation be little thought of on earth, it is much thought of in heaven; if it is the lowest in men's pursuits here, it is the highest in their enjoyments there. Think of the object of their praises: not only "God," but "the Lamb." What an argument for the Divinity of Christ!—that in the heavenly world He is presented as occupying the same seat of dignity, surrounded with the same worshippers, receiving the same homage as the Father! Look at the harmony of their praise. It is one song. Yes, we shall be harmonised in heaven, if we are not upon earth. Notice, lastly, the rapture of their praise—"they sing with a loud voice." Hosannahs will be changed into hallelujahs. And that sung not with dulness, as we too often now worship God; not with coldness, as if our praises came from lips of ice; no, but with rapture of hearts too full to hold their bliss. The song will never cease and never tire. I have a question to ask you: Will you be there? Will you join that multitude? Will you swell that choir and anthem? (*J. A. James.*) *A glimpse of the redeemed in glory*:—I. WHO ARE THERE? 1. "A multitude." The region is not solitary. Once it was. The period was when God was all in all. There was the throne, and the great I Am sat upon that throne. But there was no world beneath it, and no multitude before it. And even after the sons of God were made, it was long before any of our race was there. When Abel found himself before the throne, he found no human comrade there. But thus it is not now. There is "a multitude"—so many, as to give the region a friendly look of terrestrial brotherhood—so many, that the affinities and tastes which still survive will find their counterparts—so many, that every service will be sublimed, and every enjoyment heightened, by the countless throng who share it. 2. A mighty multitude. "A great multitude, which no man could number." Not a stinted few—not a scanty and reluctant remnant; but a mighty host—like God's own perfections, an affluent and exuberant throng—like Immanuel's merits, which brought them there, something very vast, and merging into infinity. 3. A miscellaneous multitude. "Of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." For many ages one nation supplied most of the inhabitants. But Jesus broke down the partition wall; and since His gospel went into all the world, all the world has contributed its citizens to the New Jerusalem. All kindreds and people are there—men of all aptitudes and all instincts—men of all grades and conditions. And there, suffused with sanctity, and softened into perfect subjection, we may recognise the temperament or the talent which gave each on earth his identity and his peculiar interest. Blended

and overborne by the prevailing likeness to the Elder Brother, each may retain his mental attributes and moral features; and in the dimensions of their disc, and the tinting of their rays, the stars of glory may differ from one another. 4. A multitude who once were mourners. "These are they which came out of great tribulation." To live in a world like this was itself a tribulation—a world of distance from God—a world of faith without sight—a world of wicked men; but they have come out of that tribulation. To have had to do with sin was a terrible tribulation—from the time that they were first convinced of it, all along through the great life-battle, contending with manifold temptations—contending with their own carnality and sloth, their pride and worldly-mindedness, their unruly passions and sinful tempers: but they have come out of that tribulation also. 5. And they are a multitude who shall form an eternal monument of the Redeemer's grace and power. Such are the human inhabitants of heaven. II. BUT WHAT IS IT THAT THEY DO THERE? 1. They celebrate a victory. They have "palms in their hands." They are "overcomers." 2. They serve God. Adoration at the throne, activity in the temple—the worship of the heart, the worship of the voice, the worship of the hands—the whole being consecrated to God—these are the service of the upper sanctuary. Here a week will often see us weary in well-doing; there they are drawn on by its own deliciousness to larger and larger fulfilments of Jehovah's will. Here we must lure ourselves to work by the prospect of rest hereafter: there the toil is luxury, and the labour recreation—and nothing but jubilees of praise, and holidays of higher service, are wanted to diversify the long and industrious Sabbath of the skies. 3. They see God. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them"; or, as in chap. xxii. 4, "They see His face." 4. They follow the Lamb. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." Even in heaven something of the mediatorial economy survives. Even where they see God, they follow the Lamb, and a close and conspicuous relation continues to subsist betwixt the Redeemer and His ransomed. He remains the Leader of His blood-bought company; and whilst He prescribes their occupation, He is the immediate source of their blessedness. 5. And—just to complete the glance—there are some things which there they never do. They do not want, they do not weary, and they do not weep. (*Jas. Hamilton.*) *The redeemed in heaven:—*

I. The text presents the redeemed in heaven AS FORMING ONE BLESSED AND GLORIOUS SOCIETY. Man is formed for society, which not only furnishes some of his sweetest enjoyments, but is necessary to call forth the powers of his mind. Without it the best purposes of his being would be defeated; the benevolent principles of his nature would be rendered useless. His pleasures, from having no kindred soul to share them, would cease to please. Hence society is eagerly sought as essential to our happiness; but the pleasures which it is fitted to yield are greatly impaired by a variety of disagreeable circumstances, arising out of the imperfection of the present state. But it is otherwise with the society of heaven. There the honey is without the sting, and the rose without the thorn, and attachment and intercourse without any detraction or alloy. Their opportunities of intercourse are ample, and the pleasures which flow from it are of the purest kind. Here it is with difficulty that we can select from the crowd a few with whom we are disposed to unite in intimate fellowship; but there are to be found all the great and the good who ever existed in the universe of God. Their intercourse is free and unreserved. The caution and concealment which we often find it necessary to observe in our correspondence with one another, are, amongst them, altogether unknown. One common principle of sympathy is diffused throughout the whole; and whatever each has to communicate finds a response in every bosom, and awakens a reciprocal emotion in every soul. Their attachment for one another is also sincere and ardent.

II. In the text the redeemed in heaven are represented AS A SOCIETY OF VAST AMOUNT. Heaven is not to be viewed as a thinly peopled country, or a place of narrow and confined dimensions, containing only a few inhabitants. We are taught to conceive of it as a large and extensive empire, teeming everywhere with a happy and active population. When we think of the number who, during the long period of the Old Testament dispensation, lived and died in the faith of the Messiah to come—and of the still greater number who, since His coming, have believed in Him to the saving of the soul—the whole, taken collectively, will be found to be a countless multitude. To those who are now in the world of glory we must add the multitude who shall believe in the Son of God ere the gospel dispensation comes to a close; and then, who shall be able to calculate their amount?

III. In the text the redeemed in heaven are represented AS COLLECTED FROM ALL

THE VARIETIES OF THE HUMAN RACE. Heaven is not the destined dwelling-place of any one class only of the human race. The gospel reveals a common salvation, and opens a path to heaven for all the diversities of the human race. Many have already "come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and have sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven"; and every day is adding to their number. No power shall prevent the universal diffusion of the gospel when "the time to favour Zion, even the set time, is come." Scepticism and infidelity shall find a grave. Pagan superstition shall pass away as the mist which rolls up the mountain's side disappears before the rising glory of the summer morn. Then "all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him: for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations." He shall take to Himself His great power and reign. IV. In the text the redeemed in heaven are represented AS IN THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF THEIR GOD AND REDEEMER. Even in this dark and distant world the people of God enjoy His gracious presence. To them He manifests Himself as He doth not unto the world. He blesses them with the knowledge of His character, and with a sense of His love; but here they see Him only obscurely. They see Him through the medium of His Word and ordinances, as in a mirror, darkly. It is otherwise in heaven. There He gives displays of His glory, of which the Shekinah, the bright shining cloud in which He appeared of old in the holy of holies, was but a faint and feeble emblem. There He is beheld, not in the dim vision of faith, but clearly, as with our bodily organs we behold the sun shining in the firmament. Even in heaven it is true, that as to His essence, God will be for ever unseen and unknown. But there He manifests Himself by such external tokens as show that He is near. The beams of His glory are so diffused over all that happy land, that all its inhabitants have the clear and intimate perception of His presence, and a full and distinct consciousness of abiding in it. They feel themselves to be walking continually in the brightness of His face! V. The text represents the redeemed in heaven AS DISTINGUISHED BY SPOTLESS HOLINESS. From all that was imperfect in their character here below; from all that was wrong in their temper or disposition; from all that was feeble in their love and devotion; from all that was displeasing to the view of others, they are entirely and for ever freed. They appear "without fault before the throne of God." VI. In the text the redeemed in heaven are represented AS ENJOYING THE HONOURS AND BLISS OF A TRIUMPH. (*D. M. Inglis.*) *Society in heaven*:—1. There is nothing which is so distressing to an earnest man as the thought which sometimes rises in his mind, that here we are bound together in families and nations; that after death all such relations cease; that all becomes individual and solitary. If St. John's teaching is true, this teaching is false. The multitude that no man can number is a society. Their robes have become white, because every stain of selfishness has been washed from them by the blood of the Lamb. Their palms show that they have gotten the victory over those causes which have destroyed the unity of kindreds and nations here. There is no dull uniformity, no single tongue: but all is harmonious amidst diversity. In that company the one word which is connected with the Divine name is Salvation; salvation from the curse that men have made for themselves. 2. The sight of this multitude from every nation and kindred must have been a lesson to the missionary of that day, may be a lesson to the missionary of this, tending to abate his pride, but also—why do I say *but*, why not *therefore*!—his despair. He sometimes tries to console himself with thoughts of God's mercy to those who are ignorant, and have had no means of knowing better. But then he sees that the heathens among whom he goes are actually brutelised and corrupted; no tolerance of their religion can make that fact less appalling to him. And then, when he thinks how few can ever hear his preaching, how few can understand the sounds he utters, he begins to doubt if God has not deserted His own world. But it is not so. His converts may be few. He may have little power of making himself intelligible. But He of whom the missionary speaks, He who has sent him, has His ways of making Himself intelligible, has His ways of bringing people of every nation, and tongue, and clime, through much tribulation, to a knowledge of the Lord who died for them and is ever with them, to a knowledge of His Father and their Father. 3. I am aware how easily a captious bystander, knowing nothing of the real anguish of a missionary, or of his real inspiration, may turn what I have said into an argument why he may be indifferent to the work, seeing it will be performed without him. In hours of unutterable sorrow,

voices of consolation have come to you, you knew not from whence. In times of temptation, when your souls were balancing on the edge of a precipice, some old sentence has been brought back to you from the field of sleep, some house or tree has served to pour forth strange warnings or encouragements. Why may not those whispers have been borne from those who spoke them of old to the ear, not as now to the heart? Why may not elder patriots and martyrs be echoing Christ's own words in the ears of their brothers, in lonely dungeons which no friend in the flesh can approach, at the stake when no visible smile may greet them, when God's name is used to condemn them—"Be faithful unto death, He will give you the crown of life." And why may not these same be the teachers and evangelists of the lands for which they wept and bled below? 4. There is one thought more in connection with this subject which I dare not suppress. In the calendar of a great part of Christendom All Saints' Day is followed by All Souls' Day. We may remember that the angels of God rejoice over one sinner that repents, because God rejoices. We may be sure that He, without whom a sparrow does not fall to the ground, does not lose sight of a soul which He has made. We may be sure, therefore, that all saints care for all souls. Their affections, their powers of sympathy and blessing, are not limited as ours are by circumstances of time and space. They are limited only by that love of God, the height and depth and length and breadth of which they are as incapable of measuring as we are, but which flows forth to them, and in them, and through them everlastingly. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The great multitude* :—It is a refreshing thing to look away for a moment from the strife and uncharitableness of human systems and conclusions, each disposed to narrow heaven within its own pale and party, and to behold "a multitude, such as no man could number," entering by the gate into the everlasting city. But whilst we may justly rejoice in being able to appeal from human judgment to Divine, in having the authority of Scripture for not only assigning vast capacity to heaven, but for regarding it as the home of an interminable throng, we are to take heed that we lower not the conditions of admission, as though the entrance must be easy, because a great multitude shall be there. The great, the solemn truth remains, that "there shall enter into the city nothing which defileth," "neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." And a glance at the context should suffice to keep down any rising thought that, because there shall be "a great multitude" in heaven, and, therefore, perhaps, numbers whom their fellow-men never expected to be there, some may find admission who have taken no pains to secure so great a blessing. So far from there being anything for you to reckon upon, ye who are not striving after a moral fitness for heaven, in the alleged vastness of the multitude which is to occupy heaven, there is much to admonish and warn you: if ye know nothing of the "great tribulation," of the warfare with "the world, the flesh, and the devil," ye may forfeit your places: but those places will not stand empty: "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"; and He will not be reduced through the want of faithful disciples to the admitting into His presence the rebellious and unclean. Yea, and over and above there being a warning to us in the fact that heaven shall be peopled to the full, even should we ourselves come short of the inheritance, is it not an animating thing to be told of all "nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," as contributing to the occupancy of the majestic abode? Oh, glorious society which shall thus be gathered from all ages, all ranks, all countries! There is beauty in diversity, there is majesty in combination. Even now it is felt to be an ennobling, inspiring association, if the eminent of a single Church, the illustrious of a solitary country, be gathered together in one great conclave. How do meaner men flock to the spot; with what interest, what awe, do they look upon persons so renowned in their day; what a privilege do they account it if they mingle awhile with sages so profound, with saints so devoted; how do they treasure the sayings which reach them in so precious an intercourse. And shall we think little of heaven when we hear of it as the meeting-place of all that hath been truly great, for of all that hath been truly good; of all that hath been really wise, for of all that hath yielded itself to the teachings of God's Spirit, from Adam to his remotest descendant? But it is not merely as asserting the vastness of the multitude which shall finally be gathered into heaven that our text presents matter for devout meditation. We are not to overlook the attitude assigned to the celestial assembly, an attitude of rest and of triumph, as though there had been labour and warfare, and the wearied combatants were henceforward to enjoy unbroken quiet. "They stood before the

throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Not that by repose we are to understand inactivity, for Scripture is most express on the continued engagement of every faculty of a glorified saint in the service of the Creator and Redeemer. The great multitude stand before the throne—the attitude implying that they wait to execute the commands of the Lord; and they join in a high song of praise and exultation, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." No idleness then, though there is perfect repose. But rest, as opposed to anything that is painful or toilsome in employment—repose, as implying that there shall never again be weariness, exhaustion, difficulty, or danger, notwithstanding that there shall be the consecration of the whole man to the work of magnifying the Lord. What an attractive, what an animating view of heaven is that of its being a state of repose, as contrasted with our present state of warfare and toil—the white robe in place of the "whole armour of God"; the palm in place of the sword in the hand. For—let the course of the Divine dealings with any member of the Church be the very smoothest that is compatible with a state of probation, still, compassed about as we all are with infirmity, called upon to do many things to which we are naturally disinclined, which we can neither perform without painful effort nor omit without sinful neglect; exposed to temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil—indeed it were hard to understand how any believer could often be other than "weary and heavy laden." It is not that he would give up the service of God, but that he would be able to serve God without weariness. It is not that he would be released from the struggle with corruption, but that he would have no corruption to struggle with, the final touches of sanctification having been given, so that he is "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." And such a state of repose awaits us in heaven. There is another distinguishing feature of the heavenly state which may be gathered from our text. You cannot fail to observe that, though the great multitude is collected from all nations and tribes, there is perfect concord or agreement; they form but one company and join in one anthem. The redeemed are to constitute one rejoicing company. Nay, and the representation may almost be said to go beyond this. How are they to constitute this one company, associated by close ties, and joining in the same song, unless they are to know one the other hereafter? When Christ speaks of many as coming from the east and the west, He speaks also of their sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. But this were apparently no privilege, unless they are to know these patriarchs. It argues a heart still bound up in selfishness, if it be little to us that, admitted into heaven, we are to be freed from all petty bounds and distinctions, and to form part of one close but countless community. The soul should be stirred within us as we think of patriarchs, and prophets, and priests, and kings—of apostles, confessors, and martyrs; of the illustrious, not by earthly achievements which too often dazzle by a false glare; but the illustrious in the fight of faith—and not only of the illustrious whose names go down in Christian biography, the precious legacy of age to age; but of that unknown, that unremembered multitude, the good, the godly, of successive generations, who, in the quiet privacies of ordinary life, have served their God and their Redeemer—for "he," saith Christ, "that overcometh shall inherit all things"—oh, I say, the soul should be stirred within us as we think of such an assembly, and hear ourselves invited to join it, and are told that we may have the friendship of each and every one in the interminable gathering. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *All saints*:—Is not this a strengthening, elevating thought—this of that countless multitude which will one day stand before the throne? How often we are tempted to be out of all heart. The world seems so strong, and the Church seems so weak—Christianity itself almost a failure, unable to enlist the affections of men, at least of the men of this generation, impotent to contest the battle-field of the earth with the powers which are arrayed against it. Put away from you thoughts like these. They are the pleas of our indolence, the outcomings of our unbelief. They may be few here or few there; but let them all be gathered into one, and they will constitute an innumerable company. God would not be satisfied with less. He will have no solitudes, no vacant thrones in heaven, but infinite multitudes to be sharers in His blessedness, to declare to all creation and through all eternity the wondrous counsels of His love. And then what thoughts arise in the heart as we contemplate not the numbers only, but the quarters from which all these will have been gathered—from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Those who were divided here by all which could divide, who were separated from one another by immense distances of time, of space, of culture—barbarians to one another here—yea, those who were

kept asunder by far sadder barriers than these, those who misunderstood, perhaps mutually anathematised one another, shall yet, being one in Christ, one in their faith and love to Him, stand together before the throne, and exchange the long alienations and miserable discords of earth for the blessed concords of heaven. Think, too, from other points of view, what a marvellous company will that be! Think of all that will be there, and—awful thought!—of all that will *not* be there. Not there many who have walked in the full blaze of gospel light, who, knowing much, have loved not at all; whose places, therefore, for there were places for them if they had shown themselves worthy of them, shall know them not; while there will be found in that wondrous company not a few who, amid much darkness, superstition, and error, have been true to the central truth of all, have clung to Jesus with full affiance of heart; and when it shall be inquired with something of wonder why this one or the other is so near to the throne, “He loved much,” or “She loved much,” will be the key and explanation of all. (*Abp. Trench.*)

The saved a great multitude :—Looking through a large library the other day, I came upon an old collection of tracts, printed some two hundred years ago, and one of them, written by an Oxford professor, bore the wonderful title, “Moral reflections upon the number of the elect, proving plainly that not one in a hundred thousand, probably not one in a million, from Adam to our time, shall be saved.” (*W. Baxendale.*)

Salvation to our God . . . and unto the Lamb.—*The song of the Church in heaven and on earth* :—The work of redemption by Christ fills the Church in heaven and earth with wonder, gratitude, and joy; “Salvation to God, and to the Lamb.” God Himself rejoices in the work of redemption. When He made the world, He rested, and was refreshed—all was very good; when the scheme of His providence shall be wound up, He will rejoice in all His works; but He delights more in the work of redemption than in those of creation and providence; for these are only subservient to this illustrious display of Himself. The saints in heaven and on earth rejoice in the work of redemption, and praise God for it: “Salvation to God and to the Lamb.” They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb; the wonders of creation, and providence, and grace. On earth the saints praise God with many imperfections. How can they sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? But they sing in faith, in hope, with sincerity, and with true gladness of heart. The same principle which influences the saints in heaven to rejoice in the increase of their own number, operates in the saints on earth, when Sion breaks forth on the right hand and on the left. They rejoice, therefore, when they hear that the Word of the Lord runs and is glorified over all the earth. The holy angels rejoice in the salvation of sinners by the Lamb (ver. 11). God reveals as much of His plan of grace towards sinners of Adam’s family to the angels as fills them with wonder and love. They rejoice in this work, because they rejoice in God Himself as the author of it. The joy of angels in relation to the work of the redemption of sinners is continually upon the increase. They rejoice in the additions daily made to the glory of Christ—in the new crowns set on His head, the new victories of His grace over Satan and sin—the new evidences of the Divinity of His religion—and with the Church shall sing a new song, when nations are born at once, and a people in a day! The work of redemption is a proper foundation for joy. In heaven they sing for ever of it; on earth, all who know it admire and adore God who hath abounded in it in all wisdom and prudence. It is the chief of His ways. The work of salvation by Christ gives wonderful displays of God, and therefore is a foundation of joy and wonder. In this stupendous work of redemption God is seen as a God of infinite mercy. His mercy flows in the atonement of His Son, for He is a just God, as well as merciful, and a Saviour. The salvation of sinners greatly exalts the character of the Saviour. Each person in the Godhead has His own distinct part in salvation and His own distinct glory. The glory belongs to the eternal Three, but the Lamb is the chief subject of praise by the Church. (*The Christian Magazine.*)

The worship of heaven :—Heaven’s worship is the worship of praise. Prayer is not offered there. The ordinance, “Every one that asketh receiveth,” does not extend to heaven. Heaven’s tenants are always receiving; but they receive everything without asking. The spiritual discipline of asking is not needed in heaven. Complaint is not heard there; deprecation is not heard there; intercession is not heard there. God’s attributes are celebrated in chant and song. If the spirits in heaven were disembodied there would still be worship; but it would be silent worship—worship in affection; worship in volition. But if corporeal form shelter human souls there, and the faculty of utterance be given to those forms,

surely that faculty must be consecrated to the purposes of devotion. There are bodies, and there is utterance. The praise of heaven is common—not solitary. There are no mere listeners there—all worship. And this praise is melodious. It is not praise in common speech, or ordinary language. There is music as well as voice. There are harmony and melody. The celestial congregation do not *speak* praise—they sing praise. It is known to all, moreover, that the worship of heaven is neither localised nor limited to seasons. There is incessant worship. The worship of the Paradise regained corresponds with the worship of the Paradise lost. All the ground is hallowed; every day is a holy day; every hour a season of worship; and worship is always in season. Is it possible for us men ever to be engaged in this worship? What are the qualifications of redeemed men for the worship of the skies? Capacity, qualification even for the worship of the skies, is involved in all that constitutes your salvation; involved in your new birth; involved in the position which you occupy as justified before God; involved in your sanctification. 1. A saved man has a capacity for the worship of heaven in his personal holiness, and in the knowledge of God with which that holiness is associated. Born with a sinful nature, and going astray from the beginning of life, he could not always see God in himself. Conscience then was smarting; but the wound is healed. Memory was then burdened with a load of transgression; but that load is taken away. Sin in various forms had dominion in that heart; but the dominion of sin is for ever destroyed. 2. Glorified saints have ability to worship in ever increasing knowledge of God; for in all celestial objects God is seen, and seen in those objects more and more. 3. The saved in heaven are capable of celestial worship through the influence over them of superior spirits. Before redeemed men rank angels and seraphs; and rising above them are thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. All these worship, and they excite, and they encourage the saved man to worship. To be silent would be to imprison his own heart, and to fetter his own mind. 4. The serenity, the peace of mind which characterises the redeemed is another element of power for worship. The peace of God—that quietness of soul which, as you know, is essential to the highest worship, to adoration and to praise—keeps their hearts and minds; and there is no confusion of mind, no perturbation of soul. The troubled sea is an emblem of an unpardoned soul; but a sea of glass is a symbol of the glorified spirit. Understanding, reason, imagination, conscience, emotion, will, are all in their place, performing with accuracy and vigour the functions assigned to them. Here is no intellectual dulness or obliquity, no misguided or misplaced affection. The harp is strung and tuned, every string perfect, and the tension complete. The voice is strong, and sweet, and clear: there is no harshness, no lack of melody. 5. The equal development of every spiritual faculty and grace increases the capacity for worship. Inequality in our spiritual development is a great hindrance to worship. Here we often see narrow minds, feeble hearts, weak faith, fickle love, wavering hope, or broken utterance. In heaven the development is like that of a full-blown flower, or of perfectly ripe fruit. 6. Conscious identity is another element of power. Into the “I am,” and the “I was,” the glorified Christian fully enters; and the contrasts prompt him to worship. “I was,” he says, “in danger—I am safe. I was a criminal—I am a righteous child. I was a sufferer—I am now without a tear, without a sigh. I was poor—I have now an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” 7. They have qualification also in the knowledge of all things with which they need to be acquainted. Many a matter that we have here called a mystery will there be fully explained. 8. A mighty power in worship is that of love—the love of gratitude and the love of complacency. We mean a deep sense of obligation to God, and a thorough joy in God. (S. Martin, D.D.)

Vers. 11, 12. **All the angels stood round about the throne.**—*The existence and employment of the holy angels*:—I. THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS. To what purpose discourse to us concerning the inhabitants of a world future, remote, and of which our ideas are very confused? Let us rather attend to the world in which we live, and to them that dwell therein. It would be perfectly right so to do if the world in which we live were the only one with which we were connected, and death the final period of our existence. But if there be another world which is to receive us for ever, the existence of its inhabitants becomes a speculation both pleasing and important. This state of our being, you say, is future. It is so to-day, but before to-morrow it may be present to some. You say it is remote. That by no means appears. It may not be “far from every one of us.” The spiritual and eternal

world, into which we are, at a destined hour, to be born, may be, like its Divine Maker and King, near us, and round about us, in a manner of which we are not aware, nor shall be, till we enter it. But our ideas of this future world are confused and indeterminate. We have the Divine assurance of God's Word that such a world exists. But the truth is, that whatever ideas of a future and invisible world may be, at certain times, impressed upon our minds, they are presently effaced by a tide of business or pleasure, and stand, therefore, in need of being continually renewed. Now, what can do this so effectually as frequent meditations on the blessed inhabitants of that world, the holy angels? We love to recollect a place, by the circumstance of those friends we have in it. By thinking of them, we are led to think of the place where they are, and learn to love and desire it the more. An intercourse is by this means opened, a correspondence established, between heaven and earth. II. THEIR NATURE AND CONDITION. Angels are spirits. Not formed of the same gross materials, they are free from the inconveniences we feel, the temptations and sufferings to which we are subject. Their appearance is glorious as the light of heaven; and their motion, like that, rapid, and, as it were, instantaneous. The contemplation of so many excellent and happy beings opens our understandings, and enlarges our conceptions of the Creator's power and goodness. But if we ourselves are miserable, what benefit, it will be asked, can result to us from contemplating the happiness of others? Will not our misery be rather aggravated than alleviated by it? We do not cease to be wretched upon earth because the angels are otherwise in heaven. Redeemed by the Son of God, leave off, O man, to complain! Wait but for a little while in faith and patience, and their happiness shall be yours. III. THE PERFECT SERVICE, READY AND UNLIMITED OBEDIENCE BY THEM, PAID TO THEIR ALMIGHTY CREATOR. Their felicity does not consist in freedom and independence. Like the lightnings, which say, "Here we are," they are represented as waiting before the throne, ready, at the Divine command, to fly to the extremities of the world. Nor are the angels more exact in loyalty to their King than in preserving due subordination in their several ranks and under their respective leaders, without which peace could not be in heaven any more than on earth. IV. THE BENEVOLENCE AND CHARITY OF THE HOLY ANGELS; the love they have always shown for man, and the services by them rendered to him. And here a scene opens worthy of all admiration, gratitude, and praise, for never do those blessed spirits obey with greater delight the commands of their Maker than when mankind is the subject of those commands; so deeply, from the beginning, have they interested themselves in our welfare. (Bishop Horne.)

Vers. 13, 14. *What are these which are arrayed in white robes.—What and whence are these?—*I. Concerning the bright spirits in heaven—WHENCE CAME THEY? "These are they which came out of great tribulation." 1. They were then like ourselves, for, in the first place, they were tried like others. (1) The saints now glorified were not screened from sorrow. I saw to-day a number of lovely flowers; they were as delightful in this month of February as they would have been in the midst of summer; but I did not ask, "Whence came they?" I know very well that they were the products of the conservatory; they had not been raised amid the frosts of this chill season, else they had not bloomed as yet. But when I look upon God's flowers blooming in heaven, I understand from the voice of inspiration that they enjoyed no immunity from the chill breath of grief; they were made to bloom by the master hand of the Chief Husbandman, in all their glory, amid the adversities and catastrophes which are common to men. (2) They were not even screened from temptation. To the child of God, temptation to sin is a greater grievance than the suffering of pain. Storms on any sea are to be dreaded; but a whirlwind raised by Satan on the black sea of corruption is horrible beyond conception. Yet, do not say you cannot enter heaven because you are tempted, for all those snow-white bands attained their glorious standing through much temptation, as well as through much affliction. (3) They were men who as keenly felt trial and temptation as we do. Good men, because they are good, are not the less sorrowful when their beloved ones are taken from them: gracious men are not by grace petrified so as to despise the chastening of the Lord. Jacob mourned for Rachel, and David for Jonathan. Peter wept bitterly, and Paul had continual heaviness. Tribulations abounded and afflictions were multiplied to the first disciples, and we wrong both themselves and us if we dream that it was easier for them to suffer than for us. I grant you that they possessed a secret

something which enabled them to endure, but that something was not homeborn in their nature any more than it is in ours. They were fortified by a secret strength which they found at the throne of God in prayer, a patience which the Holy Ghost wrought in them, and which He is equally ready to work in us. 2. The saints who are now in heaven needed trial like others. To what end do men need tribulation? We reply, they often require it to arouse them; and yonder saints who serve God day and night in His temple, once slept as do others, and needed to be bestirred. They required adversity to educate them into complete manhood, for they, too, were once babes in grace. They needed tribulation, moreover, that they might be made like their Saviour. 3. The children of God who are in heaven in their trials had no other support than that which is still afforded to all the saints. 4. If there was any difference between those saints and ourselves, it lay in their enduring superior tribulations, for "these are they that came out of great tribulation."

II. WHAT ARE THESE? The reply was, "They have washed their robes," &c. 1. All those in heaven were sinners, for they all needed to wash their robes. 2. All who are in heaven needed an atonement, and the same atonement as we rely upon. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the blood of bulls or of goats. 3. The saints in heaven realised the atonement in the same way as we must do. The act which gave them the virtue which lies in the atonement was the act of faith. There is nothing to do, and nothing to feel, and nothing to be, in order to forgiveness; we have but to wash and the filth is gone. III. NOW, WHAT OF ALL THIS? Why, first of all, we must not draw the conclusion that trouble and temptation are any argument that a man will get to heaven. I add a caution. I would, however, have you learn that no amount of trial which we have to suffer here, if we are believers in Jesus, should lead us to anything like despair, for however trouble may encompass us to-day, those in heaven came through as great a tribulation, and why may not we? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Whence come the saints?*—"Whence came they?" Heaven, then, itself has a retrospect as well as a fruition. Heaven itself is a sequel and a consequence as well as a fact, and a present. Heaven is an arrival; heaven is a development; heaven is a result, in one aspect, however infinite its capacities of attainments beyond. "Whence came they?" Then they were somewhere before. These same persons, different as they are, transfigured as they are from anything that we see, yet were once here. We have seen such persons; we have talked with some of them. The dark river was known not to them, and it was no unmaking and remaking of them to us. "Whence came they?" They came from this earth, and they are perfected. But the question as it is answered in the context has a fuller meaning than this—it pre-supposes this, and passes on. "From earth," of course is the answer, but from earth how conditioned and how used? Heaven is a sequel and a consequence—a consequence of what sort of earth? Heaven is a consummation, though never itself to be consummated. Then of what experience is it the consummation! He calls it two things: two only—pain and purification. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes." The simplicity, the brevity of the answer may surprise us? "Whence came they?" We might have expected in answer, From every possible variety of condition, private or public, humble or conspicuous, adverse or prosperous; wealth and length of days, or else sickness, privation, distress, and woe. Not so. The kind of earth from which they came was one and but one. "These are they that came out of great tribulation." Pain, then, is the common feature of the earth, of which the terminus is heaven. It is a thought which has exercised Christian people, and we cannot wonder at it. If those who wear the white robes came out of great tribulation, what prospect is there for me to whom tribulation is an experience unknown? The question ought to press upon us. It is easy to say, You cannot force, you need not invite, and you must not simulate pain. If pain does not come the fault is not yours. Pain may be on its way—you must bear it when it comes. This is true, but it is not all the truth. If life smiles on you personally, if it supplies your abundant needs, if its occupations are pleasant, if its friends are many, if its bereavements are few and far between; if, therefore, you cannot affect not to be happy, it is plain that as regards yourself, the only two questions on this head can be—Are you thankful? and Are you kind? Do you receive your blessings from God, and do you share them generously with men? But much more than this. The compass of pain is not thus limited. If neither bodily pain

nor mental is yours, we go on to ask, What of spiritual? Is it no pain to feel myself so sinful, that when I would do good evil is present with me; when I would feel the wonderful love there is no response; when I would mount up into the heaven, which is God's, I faint, and fall back into the dreamy world where God is not? But while spiritual pain is one kind, one ingredient of the great tribulation, there is another—the purely unselfish pain: the pain which looks upon the animate creation groaning in travail, and travails in pain with it; the pain which looks on this anguished England, with food not enough, and work not enough for its toiling millions; feels, too, with the foolish misled dupes of the so-called sympathy or philosophy which leads them on to quagmires and quicksands unfathomable. Yes, there is an unselfish as well as a spiritual tribulation; and I think some of the white-robed in heaven have come out of it. So, then, pain is one of the two earths out of which heaven is made. Now for the other. We have called it in one word, purification. They washed their robes down here and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Purification: the being made white; Oh, who shall give me that for this black thing, this spotted, sullied, sordid blackening which is all around me? I feel it, I am ashamed, I am unhappy. Oh, for the whiteness, oh, for purification. Is it a name; is it a dream; or is it a reality? These white-robed ones in heaven, they have it; nay, they had it down here. So then justification, which is in other words the forgiveness of sins, sets in motion sanctification, which is purification, too. But, lastly, we would bid you all ask, are you in process of purification? “Who can say,” a Scriptural writer asks, “Who can say I have made my heart clean? I am pure from my sin?” (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Final blessedness of the saints:—I. THE PREVIOUS CONDITION OF THE PERSONS HERE PRESENTED TO JOHN'S NOTICE. One unacquainted with God's ways, or with the history of our race, would have been, perhaps, ready to conclude that, in their journey hither, their path had been strewn with flowers and gladdened with perpetual sunshine. This we ourselves would be apt to desire. But the ways of God are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. The zeal of saints for the truth of God; their opposition to the sinful practices which abounded around them; their diligence in the cultivation of holy affections; and their zeal in the discharge of private and public duties—all standing forth in marked contrast with the maxims and customs of a world lying in wickedness—have ever exposed them to innumerable trials, to reproaches, and sufferings. In addition to the causes of tribulation which we have now specified as the peculiar lot of the Christian, I mention farther the remains of sin within him.

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THEY HAVE ATTAINED THEIR PRESENT STATE. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF WHICH THESE SAINTS ARE REPRESENTED AS PARTAKERS. (*Jas. Clayton.*)

The worshippers in the heavenly temple:—I. THE TEMPLE HERE SPOKEN OF. It is a heavenly temple; a holy place, standing not on this perishable world, but on the everlasting hills of heaven. All other temples have been erected by man, but this temple has been built by Jehovah Himself, to be the eternal dwelling place of His Church, and the seat of His own glorious throne. The most glowing descriptions that language can convey, and the most exalted conceptions to which our imaginations can reach, fall infinitely short of that dazzling splendour which fills the courts of the living God. The world which we inhabit, though defiled by sin and under the curse of God, has yet so much beauty and magnificence in it, that we are often delighted and astonished as we contemplate its scenes. What, then, must be the glory of that world which has never felt the polluting touch of sin, which was prepared before the foundations of the earth were laid? Happy are they who dwell in such a temple! Blessed is the man who is but a doorkeeper in such a house! II. THE HAPPY BEINGS WHO ARE THE WORSHIPPERS IN THIS SPLENDID TEMPLE.

1. The former condition of these worshippers. (1) It was an earthly condition. They were not, like the angels, always in this house. They were natives of an apostate world. (2) Their condition, too, was a sinful one. There is not one among them who was not a transgressor while on earth, and who has not to this very hour a remembrance of his guilt. (3) They were also in an afflicted condition. Many of them came here out of a state of peculiar distress and suffering. 2. Their present condition. (1) It is a state of peace, a state of freedom from pain and sorrow. The billows of adversity which once filled them with fear still swell and rage, but they are all raging far beneath them, and can never again toss them with their waves. (2) It is also a state of purity. “They have washed their robes,” &c. They were indeed continually contracting fresh defilement as long as they remained on earth, and were constrained to wash again and again

in the same fountain that cleansed them at first; but if this fountain had left the unpardoned guilt of only one sin upon their souls, that one sin would have disqualified them for the pure services of the habitation of God, and have barred for ever its sacred doors against them. This free and full pardon of sin is not, however, the only blessing which the heavenly worshippers have obtained through the blood of the Lamb. The same fountain that freed them from the guilt of sin, washed away sin itself, and freed them from its power. Not that they were at once brought into this state of perfect purity. Years passed away before some of them were completely sanctified, and made meet to minister among the saints in light; and they were all harassed to their dying hour, in a greater or less degree, with the struggling corruptions of their evil hearts. But sin could not follow them beyond the grave. (3) The state of these worshippers in the temple of God is one of triumph. They have "palms in their hands." 3. The greatness of their number. Satan does not number among his subjects all the inhabitants of our globe. The Redeemer has a people on the earth. Who can tell how many an humble Christian has been travelling to the land of rest, while almost all around him, and even the honoured instrument that first turned his soul to God, have been ignorant of his faith? Lesson: 1. The gospel of Christ does not promise to its followers any exemption from the calamities of life. 2. How great is the contrast between the present and the future condition of the followers of Jesus! 3. A loud call to self-examination. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

White robes:—I. THE WHITE ROBES OF INNOCENCE. The devil stains our souls. The world, too, stains them. Alas! we stain them by our own folly and fault. II. THE WHITE ROBES OF PROMISE. These are the baptismal robes. III. THE WHITE ROBES OF CLEANSING. God gives us not one start alone in life; He gives us many. We make our promises, and we break them. But God never bids us give up hope. Try to do better. Lift up your hearts. IV. THE WHITE ROBES OF VICTORY. It will not always be striving here. It will not always be staining our robes and cleansing them anew, and then, alas! staining them once more. If we persevere, we shall win. It is not failing to succeed which is so bad, but failing to try. And all who try, however feeble they may be, however often they may give in to the forces against them, shall at the last "stand . . . clothed with white robes," &c. (*J. E. C. Weldon, M.A.*)

The human population in heaven:—I. THEIR EARTHLY LIFE WAS MARKED BY GREAT TRIAL. 1. This should teach us contentment under our trials. 2. This should inspire us with magnanimity under our trials. II. THEIR CELESTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES ARE PRE-EMINENTLY GLORIOUS. 1. Their appearance. 2. Their employment. 3. Their companionship. 4. Their blessedness. III. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY CONDITION IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO CHRIST. 1. They were originally polluted. 2. The self-sacrifice of Christ has a purifying influence. 3. Their cleansing by this influence had taken place when on earth. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

The sainted in heaven:—I. THE BEINGS TO WHOM ATTENTION IS DIRECTED. They were not the unfallen, in other words, the natives of that better country: they were redeemed human spirits. They were born of human parentage, and nursed upon a human breast. Their first expression on coming into existence was a wail, and their last, perhaps, a groan. And between those periods they had known their share of human suffering. If they had suffered, they had also sinned. No lingerers on the margin of wrong, no prodigals of a day, they had wandered into a far country, and theirs had been the alienation of years. And, if they had sinned, they had repented under the influence of the Holy Ghost; their hearts had turned in longing towards their Father's house. Nor had their experience ended here. Young Christians, in the first joy of forgiveness, are apt to think heaven very near to them—that the celestial shores will soon loom upon their view. In passing through a Christian career, there are trials to be endured. Men were they "of whom the world was not worthy." Into their labours we have entered. The harvests of their life we reap. "They came out of great tribulation." Again, they went to heaven by the way of death. II. THEIR POSITION AND GLORIOUS APPEARANCE. 1. They are before the throne of God. The meaning of the throne of God we know not. Heaven is said to be His throne, and earth His footstool. The presence of His infinite nature is diffused throughout all things; but, purged from the grossness of earth, the glorified have a more vivid sense of His presence than is given us. 2. Then notice their glorious appearance: "Clothed in white robes." (1) As being typical of their purity. No evil is there lurking within the blessed, and they shrink not beneath the Divine scrutiny. (2) White robes are significant of triumph. (3) White robes are significant of rest. The man who has laboured

throws aside the garments worn in toil, and puts on others in which to repose. In this world, the condition of the Christian is not that of rest but of labour. III. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE REDEEMED. A very natural thought is that contained in the line of the American poet, when, speaking of a departed friend, he says: "Day after day we think what she is doing." The rest of heaven is not that of death, but of infinite life. The repose of the redeemed does not consist in cessation from employ, but rather in the constant prosecution of congenial labour. Multiform will be the character of life in heaven. 1. There will be social life. There the golden chain of love will link all souls together, binding them to the throne of God. There a feeling of common love will flow through every heart. All will be at home. 2. There will be an intellectual life. The glory of man is his mind. To cultivate this stands among the highest duties of the present life. The present is the infancy of our being, but there is before us a majestic maturity. 3. The employment of heaven will be religious. In this, more than even his intellectual nature, man is capable of unlimited improvement. Even in this life no bounds can be set to faith, and hope, and love, so will it be in the future. Oh, it overwhelms us to think of the position of unfallen spirits, our brain grows dizzy from the height, our eyes dazzle in the excess of glory. Yet is there no altitude where created being now stands, but what man may attain to in the upward career of his moral progress, and for ever; and for ever will he continue to advance through the infinitudes of his nature's possibilities. (*S. Clarke.*) *The blessed state of the redeemed:—*I. THE CONDITION OUT OF WHICH THE REDEEMED HAVE COME. 1. They came out of a state of tribulation. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." (1) Disease, perhaps, sows its poisonous seeds in his frame. (2) Death bereaves him of those who were the desire of his eyes. (3) Adverse providences involve him in disappointment and indigence; the malice of men, in vexation and disgrace; and his own errors and imprudence in inextricable difficulties. (4) Existence itself may become a burden through a complication of calamities. (5) It is generally thought, however, that there is here an allusion to those sorrows which are peculiar to Christians. Like Stephen, they winged their way from martyrdom to the presence of God. 2. They came out of a state of impurity. The earth on which they dwelt is one wide scene of disobedience and rebellion against the Majesty of the universe. The taint of moral pollution adheres to all its intelligent inhabitants, and introduces disorder into its very frame. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE REDEEMED HAVE BEEN ADVANCED TO GLORY. 1. By washing their robes, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, they acquired a title to be before the throne. 2. By washing their robes, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, they acquired a meetness to be before the throne. They are freed from their inability to love and enjoy God; they are blessed with an incipient and growing meetness for heaven. III. THE NATURE OF THE FELICITY TO WHICH THEY ARE EXALTED. 1. They are raised to an exalted station. Those before the throne of God witness His glory in its brightest manifestations, and enjoy the most intimate communion with the Father of their spirits. The near sight which they obtain of God gives them more distinct apprehensions of His nature—produces more complete assimilation to His image, and fills with livelier joy. The servants who stood in the presence of Solomon must have caught something of the wisdom of their master; and those who are before the throne of God, cannot fail to advance in everything heavenly and divine. 2. They are engaged in the most exalted employments. 3. They are freed from all the infirmities, imperfections, and sufferings of the present life. 4. They make continual advances in the knowledge and enjoyment of God. (*J. Kirkwood, M.A.*) *All Saints' Day a witness of grace:—*Putting aside those festivals in the Church's year which speak to us of the life and death of our Blessed Lord, there is no festival so sublime as that which we keep to-day. We commemorate to-day, not the life of any one servant of God, but the life and example of all; of those whose very names we know not, save that we know that they are written in the Book of Life. There is a threefold lesson which speaks to all of us through this festival. 1. The lesson of faith. Especially is this a festival which tells of faith, inasmuch as, above all others, it bridges over the gulf which separates this world from the world beyond the grave. This life is to the future state what the bud is to the flower, the blade in the ear to the full corn. This is a truth of especial importance to us to-day, when we commemorate the faithful dead, whose warfare is accomplished. For it teaches us that there is a real fellowship between them and us; that their relation to us is not done away by death; that their souls are not sleeping idly; that they are living more truly, and in a

nobler sense, than we ourselves. In this world, men of noble birth desire—and a right feeling it surely is—to keep the brightness of their name untarnished, not to disgrace the title which their fathers bore. “My ancestors,” such an one will say, “were brave and pure; they helped to vindicate liberty; I will try to be not less brave, not less upright, not less generous and true, than they.” Canst thou remember this, O Christian, and forget of what spiritual lineage thou art come? so noble, so pure, so ancient, that by its side the noblest title of this world is but of yesterday? that thou art of the communion of God’s saints, and they thy fathers and ancestors in the faith? Canst thou remain cowardly, remembering that they were brave? 2. But again, the doctrine of this festival is a witness for Christian endurance. It is difficult not to feel sad when we think what multitudes of our fellow-creatures are living sordid burdened lives, whose earthly course seems little else than a constant round of suffering and care. Yet let us observe, that wherever a ray of light shines in on this mystery of suffering, it is from the blessed thought of a life unseen. Or, take the case of one, whose life is often burdened by a consciousness of sin—who finds himself compassed with infirmity; who is often wearied of this constant struggle against besetting sins, “Oh, blessed day,” such an one may well say, “when this strife shall cease; when God in His pardoning mercy shall make me to become that which I long and pray to be.” 3. But again, this blessed festival, inasmuch as it thus throws rays of brightness on the sorrows of earth, teaches us a lesson of final perseverance and spiritual joy. We need to remember that in the dreariest November, the gloomiest days of the decaying year, there still stands out a festival of summer gladness, telling of that meeting beyond the grave, where no parting shall ever mar the unity of perfect love; that gathering on the eternal shore, as when the apostles beheld on the shore of the Lake of Galilee the presence of their risen Lord. (*J. S. Bartlett, M.A.*)

All Saints’ Day.—We are not the first travellers; we are followers of those who have inherited the promises; and, far as the eye can reach, there is one long line of precursors all looking back to assure us that the proposed path is the right. Shall it then be questioned, that the greatest confirmation for faith is to be obtained from the memories of the worthies who have tried and verified the Christian religion? If there were a flaw in its proofs, it must have been long ago detected: if there were forgery in its documents, it must have been long ago exposed. And now how mighty are the external evidences of Christianity—evidences which the labours and events of centuries have piled up as an impregnable bulwark. It is enough for my private conviction, that Christianity is eighteen hundred years old. But this only applies generally to the truth of Christianity. Suppose me convinced of its truth, then how is my faith strengthened by the memory of those who have gone before me to heaven? We reply at once, that whatever man’s theoretical persuasion that Christianity is from God, there will be nothing like a practical exhibition of its energy to prevail on him to put faith in its disclosures. The great object of Christianity is to induce me to throw aside all dependence on my own moral strength, and to trust implicitly to the merits of a Surety. If I will, indeed, do this, I shall find myself strengthened for conflict with my own evil nature, and at last made more than a conqueror over sin and the grave. Yet there may be misgiving, and if we were the first to put the promises to the proof, we might almost be pardoned for hesitating ere we dared take them to ourselves. The very greatness of the thing promised, and the smallness of the condition prescribed, might cause us to question whether we had not been deceived in concluding the Bible divine. And, therefore, oh, for the history of men who have made the experiment, and proved by experience that believers in Christ gain all which is promised! Here it is that we are vastly advantaged by being followers instead of forerunners in the Christian course. You cannot show me a promise in the Bible of whose fulfilment I cannot bring you evidence in the registered experience of some believer in Christ. Does the promise refer to support in affliction? Then what is that voice that rolls in upon us from the caves of the earth, where the persecuted have taken refuge—“God is a very present help,” a most “strong tower” to all who flee to Him for refuge? Is the promise that of immortality—glorious announcements that entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our God and Saviour? Indeed, you may tell me that no biography can exhibit the fulfilment of this promise. I cannot track the burning flight of the emancipated spirit delivered from the flesh, and launched into immortality. We own this. But, nevertheless, we can show you that these promises have sustained men in the very hour of dissolution.

And though this does not show you that the promises are made good after death, yet proving them accomplished up to the very moment at which our inspection must cease, proving that they die not when everything that has not in it the breath of immortality does die, we call it nothing better than evasion, if you would plead the want of evidence of its fulfilment, because we cannot with our eyes of sense pierce the deep secrets of futurity. Now, hitherto we have spoken only of that confirmation of faith which is derivable from the experience of the righteous whom we this day commemorate; but let us now briefly consider how we may be strengthened also in patience; for those who are "clothed in white robes" are they who "came out of great tribulation." The fact that afflictions have been the portion of the faithful should remove all surprise that we ourselves have to wrestle with sorrow; the fact that God hath not forsaken the faithful, but brought good out of evil, should scatter all fears that we may be left to perish in our distress. And what will they reply if we ask them whether they regret what they suffered for Christ, or whether, if they had to live over again, they would wish to pass through the same painful discipline? Oh! for melodious sounds in which to syllable their answers. The harshness of human speech ill suits the music of their whispers. They tell you with one voice, one peal of grateful acknowledgment, that the "sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory" revealed in them. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Saints made from sinners*:—Professor Hy. Drummond addressing a meeting, said that as he walked through the city that morning, he had noticed a cloud like a pure snow-white bank resting over the slums. Whence came it? The great sun had sent down its beams into the city, and the beams had gone among the puddles, even the nauseous puddles and drawn out of them what they needed, and taken it aloft, and purified it, and there it was, above the city a cloud as white as snow! "And God," said the professor, "can make His saints, who walk in white, out of material equally unfavourable; He can make a white cloud out of a puddle, He can make saints out of the most depraved." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) These are they which came out of great tribulation.—*The ministration of suffering*:—Let us, in some few points, contrast suffering on earth with its fruits in heaven. 1. Earthly suffering seems to come either as a vengeance or as a calamity upon men. It is still a surprise until we have been long wanted to it. But the heavenly side, as disclosed in the apocalyptic vision, shows that suffering ordinarily comes neither as a vengeance nor as a calamity; for, although we may understand that God sometimes employs suffering for purposes of punishment, yet such an employment of it is special. Suffering is intercalated upon the course of nature, and is part of a universal experience. Storms may be most destroying, overflowing the land, tearing up foundations, sweeping away bridges, and submerging harvests; but this result of storms is exceptional. The fall of rain and the sweep of winds are a part of the economy of mercy. It is not for destruction, but for benefit. And so sufferings may, at times, in the hands of God, be punitive, but ordinarily they are not. Suffering is intended to make us let go of things that are lower, and to rise a grade higher. Here it seems as if God were angry; but in heaven it is seen that He was dealing in mercy. Here it seems as if great disaster had overwhelmed us; but there the breaking of the cloud over us appears as the waters of a bath from which we shall emerge purer, cleaner, and more manly. 2. Suffering seems to some contrary to the course of nature; an interruption and violation of natural order; but the revelation of the effects of suffering upon the future state shows that it is in accordance with the course of nature. It would seem rational to suppose that God built the enginery of the human mind for happiness; that the way of growth ought not to be through bafflings; that men should not find their stability by overthrow, and their liberty by restraint. At first view everything apparently tends towards freedom and full development. Men fail to see, however, that while there is one tendency toward liberty, there is another toward restraint. If anything can be shown by the indications and facts of nature, it is that man never grows to a man's full estate without the ministration of suffering; and that suffering is a part of nature, or it could not be universal. 3. The contrast between the earthly appearance of suffering as something that weakens and beats us down, and the glorious light of the heavenly side is very striking; for while on earth suffering seems, in all its immediate tendencies, to take away from man, it is, in point of fact, adding to him. It seems to beat him down; but when we look forward to the full disclosure, we find that it is building him up. While the storm pelts, men shrink. While the thunder sounds, they slink down. While the tempest rages, it is as if they were ruined.

But when the violence abates a little, they begin to lift up their head, and to perceive that it was not all dark, that it was not all thunder, that it was not all beating, that there was an element of good in it; and gradually they learn the sweet bounty and benefit that God meant to bestow upon them by afflictions. 4. The seeming cruelty of much of suffering, and the unnaturalness of it, are contrasted with great relief with this vision of the final state of those who have suffered in this world. The fatherliness and benevolence of suffering does not appear in its mere earthly relations. In heaven it is clearly pictured. There we see what it has wrought out. Human nature is very much like some elements of vegetation. In tapioca, one of the most harmless of all articles of food, there is one of the most deadly of all poisons. But the poison is of such a volatile nature, that when it is subjected to heat it escapes, and leaves only the nutriment of the starch. I think that the heart of man originally is full of poison, but that, when it is tried by affliction, little by little the poison, the rancour, the virus exhales, and leaves all the rest wholesome indeed. 5. Earthly suffering seems to weaken, to discourage them, and to destroy them; but the fact is, that it does not really destroy or weaken them. That part in us which suffering weakens is usually that very part which ought to be weakened. The great trouble in turning flax into thread or cloth is caused by that which gives the green plant its very power; for when the flax is growing, it needs two things—one is its ligneous or woody structure, and the other is its gluten. But when it has grown enough, and man wants it to make garments, to furnish the queen in the palace and the peasant in the cottage, he must get rid of these two things. And how is the flax separated from them? It is plucked and thrown into the field, that, under the influence of repeated rains and dews, the wood may rot; then the flax is taken and put through the brakes, until every particle of the stiffness and strength that it had is destroyed, and all but the stringy fibres can be shaken to the winds; then it is subjected to certain chemical processes by which the gluten is taken away; and not till then is it in a proper condition to be carried to the spinning-wheel and the loom, and manufactured into materials for use. So it is with men. There are a great many qualities which they need up to a certain point, but which beyond that are a disadvantage to them. We need a given amount of self-will and independence; but after these qualities have been carried to a certain point, the necessity for them measurably ceases, and there must be superinduced on them opposite qualities. For man is made up of contraries. He is to be as firm as iron, and as yielding as silk; he is to be persevering, and yet most ready to give up; he is to be as steadfast as a mountain, and yet easy to be entreated; he is to abhor evil, and yet to love with an ineffable love; he is to be courageous, and yet to have that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Certain qualities, when they have served their purpose, must give place to opposite qualities. Afflictions, under the supervision of Divine Providence, are working out in those that are exercised thereby beneficent results; so that suffering, while it seems frequently to be wasting and destroying men, is only wasting and destroying that part of them which they are better without than with. 6. Suffering on earth seems to set men apart from their fellows. Sometimes it puts them into obscurity. It is an experience full of solitude, voluntary and yet inevitable. Every heart knows its own bitterness. There is a delicacy in grief often. And though sometimes it is clamorous and vocal, oftener it is silent. But there is a process quietly going on, though it may not be apparent, by which those who seem to be separated in the present shall in the future be gathered together by sorrow. Those that weep apart on earth shall joy together in heaven. Those who in their sorrows are cast out from the sympathies of their fellow-men shall be gathered into the fellowship and sympathy of the heavenly host. This separation and disintegration are only apparent. Really, it is a preparation for fellowship in the world to come. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The memory of grief and wrong:—* Whether a race of finite and imperfect beings could have been trained for any worthy end, or have reached a state of conscious happiness, without the ministry of suffering, we are not competent to say. Whether this be the case or not, it is certain that very many of our happiest experiences, and of our best frames of mind and traits of character, are to be traced, if not to the direct agency, at least to the memory, of grief and wrong. I might remind you, in the first place, that the lowest degradation into which a human being can sink is a state in which there is no retentiveness, nay, hardly a transient consciousness, of painful emotion. Let a child, born in sin, be cast in very infancy upon the bleak world, without shelter, education, or guidance, exposed to the pelting of the elements, spurned and

buffeted at every hand's turn, that child becomes in his very infancy almost invulnerable to every outward influence, and incapable of feeling neglect or injury, but in this process he grows up an absolute brute. He is incapable of attachment and of gratitude. Gentleness cannot tame him, nor can severity awe him. As the frozen limb must be made sensitive to pain, before it is capable of healthy circulation or free motion, the first step towards making him happy will be to unseal the fountain of sorrow. He must weep before he can enjoy. Take next the case of one who has fallen into loathsome degradation from a favoured and happy early lot. That fall was not without frequent and severe suffering, probably not without full as much wrong received as committed. But the degraded being has lost his sensibility. Rags, hunger, blows, the alms-house, the prison-cell, have become congenial; and the traces of every new hardship or infliction are like those of the arrow in the air. Nor yet can you excite penitence or remorse by any moral representation, however pungent or attractive, of the evil and misery of guilt or the loveliness of virtue. You must go back to the days of innocence—to the earliest steps in the evil path. You must awaken the remembrance of obsolete wrong and sorrow. You must recall the prodigal's first wretched pilgrimage from the father's house. Let us pass now to experiences that lie more within our own sphere of consciousness, and, first, to domestic happiness. We can hardly be aware how much of the joy, how much of the purity and tenderness, of our home relations springs from the very events which we most dread, or from the shadow or apprehension of them. Two young hearts are plighted to each other in the most fervent love, and enter on their united life under the most prosperous auspices and with the highest hopes. Let everything answer to their anticipations—let their life flow on without grief or fear, and their love is either suddenly exhaled, or gradually frittered away. They grow mutually intolerant of their necessary differences of taste, opinion, and feeling. If they remain without mutual discord or dislike, it is through the negative power of passive good nature, while the heart-ties are all the while growing weaker, so that their dissolution would be more and more slightly and transiently felt. But, with their first weighty cares or solitudes, they are drawn into an intimacy of feeling closer than they had ever imagined before. A similar view presents itself with regard to our religious characters. Could those of us, who are endeavouring to live in the fear of God and the love of Christ, trace back the growth of the religious life in our hearts, we should find that, while the germ was there before care or sorrow had taken strong hold upon us, yet in many instances its first decided development and rapid increase were in connection with pain, perplexity, or grief. It was the clouding over of earthly prospects, that opened to us a clear and realising view of heaven. It was the failure of fond hopes that sealed our determination to lay up treasures where hope cannot fail. It was the falling away of objects of our most confident dependence, that cast us upon the Most High as our only enduring refuge and support. I have spoken of the sheltered scenes of home, and of the interior life of the soul. In the outward relations of society, we are equally indebted to the ministry of affliction. How many are the pure and virtuous friendships, now sources of unalloyed gladness and improvement, which had their commencement in a common grief, or in a burden of solicitude or sorrow, which one, whom previously we had not known how to prize, hastened to bear with us, or we with him! In old age we can also trace the genial influence of sorrow. As the cloud, that has flashed its angry lightnings and poured its desolating showers, retreats fringed with gold and crimson, and spanned with the glorious bow of God's unchanging promise, so do the griefs that have been the heaviest and the most cheerless, when they lie in the remote horizon of the past, glow with celestial radiance and Divine beauty. As the aged Christian looks back on the conflicts and sorrows of earlier years, every cloud has its rainbow, every retreating storm dies away in whispers of peace. It is the softened, painless memory of trial and of grief that feeds the spirit of patient, cheerful resignation, reconciles the soul to dissolution as it draws near, and sustains the willingness to depart, the desire to be with Christ. I have spoken chiefly of the sorrows that come to us by the direct appointment of Providence. Are there any of us who can look back on wrong and injury done to us by our fellow-men? Even this, if we were wise, we would not wish to forget. Far more noble is it to remember in full and yet forgive, to retain our sensitiveness unimpaired, and yet to take the offending brother to our hearts as if he had done us no wrong. Thus only can we make the wounds of carelessness, unkindness, envy or malice, permitted, though not wrought by Providence, coincide in their blessed ministry with the griefs that flow from the

hand of God. Thus do we turn our enemy into a benefactor, by making him the unconscious instrument of calling out in our hearts traits more elevated, Christlike, Godlike, than without his agency we could have put into exercise. Finally, the connection in which our text stands leads us to extend the benign ministry of sorrow to the world where sorrow is unknown. The frequent trials of the present state, its disappointed hopes, defeated plans, withered joys, may, far along in the heavenly life, supply the term of comparison, reveal the measure of our happiness, quicken the flow of adoring gratitude, and sustain a full consciousness of the felicity in which we are embosomed. (*A. P. Peabody.*) *Why the heavenly robes are white* :—

I. WHAT DID THESE WHITE ROBES MEAN? 1. The white robes show the immaculate purity of their character. White signifies perfection; it is not so much a colour as the harmonious union and blending of all the hues, colours, and beauties of light. In the characters of just men made perfect we have the combination of all virtues, the balancing of all excellences, a display of all the beauties of grace. Are they not like their Lord, and is He not all beauties in one? 2. By "white robes we also understand the fitness of their souls for the service to which they are appointed; they were chosen before all worlds to be kings and priests unto God, but a priest might not stand before the Lord to minister until he had put on his appointed linen garments; and therefore the souls which have been taken up to heaven are represented in white robes to show that they are completely fitted for that Divine service to which they were ordained of old, to which the Spirit of God called them while they were here, and in which Jesus Christ leads the way, being a Priest for ever at their head. 3. "White robes" also signify victory. I should think that in almost every nation white has indicated the joy of triumph. True, the Romans adopted purple as their imperial colour, and well they might, for their victories and their rule were alike bloody and cruel; but the Christ of God sets forth His gentle and holy victories by white: it is on a "white cloud" that He shall come to judge the world, and His seat of judgment shall be "the great white throne." 4. White is also the colour of rest. Well may the redeemed be thus arrayed, for they have finally put off the garments of toil and the armour of battle, and they rest from their labours in the rest of God. 5. Chiefly, white is the colour of joy. Almost all nations have adopted it as most suitable for bridal array, and so therefore these happy spirits have put on their bridal robes, and are ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

II. HOW DID THEY COME BY THOSE WHITE GARMENTS? 1. Those characters were not so pure, or, in other words, those garments were not so white by nature. They are washed, you see, and therefore they must once have been stained. Original sin has stained the character of all the sons of Adam. Do not think of one saint who has gone to his reward above as being in any way different in nature from yourselves; they were all men of like passions with us, men who had within them the same tendencies to sin. But it might be suggested that perhaps they came to their rest by a cleaner way than that which now lies before us. Possibly there was something about their surroundings which helped them to keep their garments white. No, it was not so; they passed along the road of tribulation, and that tribulation was not of a less trying kind than ours. Their road was just as miry as ours, and perhaps even more so. How this ought to assist us to feel that albeit our pathway is one in which we meet with innumerable temptations, yet inasmuch as all the glorified have come up white and clean from it, by virtue of the atoning blood, even so shall we. 2. Their garments came to be white through a miracle of grace, because they came through the great tribulation, where everything tended to defile them. I do not think that the text refers to some one great persecution, but to the great conflict of the ages in which the seed of the serpent perpetually molests and oppresses the seed of the woman. The enmity takes all sorts of shapes, but from the beginning even until now it is in the world. Now the white robed ones had come out of that continuous and general conflict uninjured: like the three holy children who came out of the furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon them. Some of them had been slandered: men of the world had thrown handfuls of the foulest mud upon them, but they washed their robes and made them white. Others of them had come out of remarkable temptations from men and devils; they were tried by the most defiling of temptations, but they overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and were delivered from every polluting trace of the temptation by the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice. It was by the operation of the blood of Christ, and by nothing else, that the glorified saints were made clean. 3. Some of the trials of the saints are evidently intended, by those who are the instruments of them,

to make them sin. Tribulation has a tendency to create, even in good men, new sins: sins into which they have never fallen before. "Brother," thou sayest, "I shall never repine against God." How knowest thou that? Thou sayest, "I have never done so unto this hour." Art thou not in health and strength? Why, then, shouldst thou murmur? But suppose the Lord were to strip thee of all these things, O man, I fear me thou mightest murmur as others have done. In some men tribulation works a very fierce temptation to distrust. 4. So, too, great trials are wonderfully apt to reveal the weakness of our graces and the number of our infirmities. Spiritual storms make a man discover what utter weakness he is, and then he is wise to fly to the blood of the Lamb. Oh, what a sweet restorative is found in the atoning sacrifice! III. WHAT LESSON COMES OUT OF THIS? 1. I would say to you, first, meditate on it. A sight of Christ in His agony is a wondrous cure for our agonies. 2. But the chief thing is this—in all times of tribulation the great matter is to have the blood of Christ actually applied to the soul. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sufferings of the redeemed:*—God's Word does not conceal, but, on the contrary, rather forewarns, that the road to Heaven is one of trial. Christ prepared His people for the highway thither being hedged with tribulation. "Beloved," says St. Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice." These trials are the ladder-steps by which the immortal spirits in this vision attained their bliss. We can almost imagine ourselves listening to their varied testimony. "God laid me," would be the experience and retrospect of one, "on a bed of sickness. I was living a life of engrossing worldliness. I was taking my health as a thing of course. I had no thought of death. He who gave me the abused talent stretched me on a couch of pain. Year after year I was familiarised with the dim night-lamp—the sleepless vigils—the aching head. But He allured me into the wilderness that He might speak comfortably unto me. I now praise Him for it all. Through the chinks of the battered earthly tabernacle were admitted the first rays of the heavenly glory. In the solitary night-watches my lips were first tuned for the heavenly song." "I was reposing in the sunshine of earthly prosperity," would be the testimony of another. "The fabled horn of plenty exhausted its ample stores in my lap. Riches increased; ah! I set my heart upon them; my closet, my Bible, my family, were sacrificed in the demon scramble. At an unexpected moment the crash came—the whole fabric of a lifetime (the golden fabric) fell to the ground. Seated amid empty coffers, and dismantled walls, and blighted hopes, I was led to bring the perishable into emphatic contrast with the eternal. I too thank my God for it all. But for that simoom-blast which swept over me, burying the hoarded treasures of a vain existence, I would have died the fool that I lived." "I was an idolater of my family," another would tell. "I was leaning too fondly and tenderly on some cherished prop—some gourd in the earth-bower of my happiness. The prop gave way—the gourd withered. But as some gentle spirit (be it that of husband, or wife, or child, or brother, or sister) winged its flight to the realms of glory, it brought me, as I was never before, into near and holy contact with the Unseen. The tie snapped on earth bound me to the throne of God. These thorns inserted in the earthly nest drove me to the wing, and suffered me not to stay my flight until I had reached the golden eaves of the heavenly home!" (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The richer flowerings of character caused by trial:*—It is said that gardeners sometimes, when they would bring a rose to richer flowerings, deprive it for the season of light and moisture. Silent and dark it stands, dropping one faded leaf after another, and seeming to go down patiently to death. But when every leaf is dropped, and the plant stands stripped to the uttermost, a new life is even then working in the buds, from which shall spring a tender foliage and a brighter wealth of flowers. So, often in celestial gardenings, every leaf of earthly joy must drop before a new and divine bloom visits the soul. *Character formed by tribulation:*—I saw a beautiful vase, and asked its story. Once it was a lump of common clay lying in the darkness. Then it was rudely dug out and crushed and ground in the mill, and then put upon the wheel and shaped, then polished and tinted and put into the furnace and burned. At last, after many processes, it stood upon the table, a gem of graceful beauty. In some way analogous to this every noble character is formed. Common clay at first, it passes through a thousand processes and experiences, many of them hard and painful, until at length it is presented before God, faultless in its beauty, bearing the features of Christ Himself. Spiritual beauty never can be reached without cost. The blessing is always hidden away in the burden, and can be gotten

only by lifting the burden. Michael Angelo used to say, as the chippings flew thick from the marble on the floor of his studio: "While the marble wastes the image grows." (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *Tribulation ministers to manhood*:—You may in the conservatory rear the trailing vine or rear the tropical plant, but put into it hardy English oak, or the tall Norwegian pine, and they, within the conservatory, would die—their life is exposure. Give them the heaven, the wind of heaven in their branches; give them the dew and the rain of heaven on their leaves: give them the great spacious earth beneath into which they can send their roots in search of moisture, and in search of strength; and they will live, and become things of beauty and joy for ever. So let man in the grace, and by the strength of God, face life; stand in front of it, with all its trouble, with all its tempest, with all its sorrow, with all its suffering! The tribulation will work patience, make the more of a man of him, make him the more able to stand in the presence of God as a servant approved. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*)

Vers. 15–17. Therefore are they before the throne of God.—*The worship and privileges of the heavenly temple*:—I. **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THAT WORSHIP WHICH IS OFFERED TO THE LORD IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE IN HEAVEN?** We may obtain an imperfect answer to this inquiry by contrasting the services of its priests with the polluted offerings of the servants of God below. 1. In contrasting the worship of these two worlds we may observe, first, that the worship of heaven is uninterrupted, constant. They who worship there never need repose. There is no weariness to put a stop to their service, nor any cares and anxieties to distract and pollute it. 2. The worship of the heavenly world is also pure. All who are engaged in it are holy worshippers. Their number is immense; they form a great multitude; but not one formalist, not one deceiver, not one hypocrite can be found amongst them. And not only are all the worshippers pure, their worship itself is free from all mixture of imperfection and sin. There is no blemish either in the priest or in the sacrifice; all is "holiness to the Lord." 3. Their worship, too, is fervent. No coldness of feeling, no deadness of love distresses their souls. 4. Hence the worship they offer is a delightful worship. All the difficulties of our service will have passed away, and every act of worship will be elevating to the spirit, and bring with it an unspeakable and glorious joy. 5. The service of heaven is also a united service. They worship in the same temple, and are all engaged in the same work; the same spirit lives in every soul, and the same song is heard from every mouth. 6. The worship of heaven is humble. In the midst of all their glory the redeemed saints appear in the heavenly temple in the character of creatures and of sinners. We see no presumption or self-exaltation in their worship, no unholiness of familiarity. II. **THE PRIVILEGES WHICH THESE HEAVENLY WORSHIPPERS ENJOY.** 1. The dignity of their station in this temple. (1) To be before the throne of God implies that they are admitted to the enjoyment of close communion with Him; that they are brought into His immediate presence, and have an intimate, enlarged, and continual intercourse with Him; that they talk with Jehovah as a man talks with his friend. (2) To stand before the throne of God implies also a participation of His glory and happiness, an entering into His blessedness. 2. The text tells us also of the rich provision which is made for all the wants of the heavenly worshippers. As the priests in the Jewish temple not only dwelt in the house of the Lord, but partook of the sacrifices which were offered therein, so the priests in Jehovah's temple above find in it all the spiritual provision their souls can desire. Their happiness consists in having all their spiritual desires kept in unceasing exercise, and in having them fully gratified. They still thirst after the water of life, and it is supplied to them largely from those rivers of pleasure which flow around the throne of Jehovah. (1) The happiness which results from this provision made for their souls is uninterrupted and unmixed. Nothing can enter their habitation to disturb or mar it. (2) Their happiness, too, is everlasting. They are not supplied out of a cistern which may be broken or exhausted, but from a fountain which can never fail. **Lessons:** 1. No man can be happy in heaven who has not first learned to delight in the worship of God. Death will make no material alteration in our tastes and desires. What we love in time we shall love in eternity. What is hateful to us now, will be hateful to us then. We must have a relish for the happiness of angels now, or we shall be utterly incapable of enjoying it hereafter. 2. The great importance and blessedness of the worship of God here on earth. 3. How desirable is death to the spiritual and heavenly-minded worshipper of God. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Man in heaven*:—I. **OUR SPIRITUAL HEAVEN.** Its great and representative idea is worship, in which

we reach at one bound the highest conception of our nature—humanity perfected, humanity in its highest condition, and humanity in its highest act. 1. The condition or character of the worshippers is described. Christ, in the sanctifying influences of His sacrificial work, was the reason of their heaven. The condition of their spiritual heaven, therefore, was the perfection of the spiritual part of their nature. It was not the locality merely—not the mere presence of God—not the employment, the robe, the palm, the harp, the worship: it was the perfect moral sympathy of their spirits with holiness, the holiness of God. 2. Their moral victory. "They came out of great tribulation." (1) Remark how strikingly the two affirmations are brought into conjunction. Their position before the throne is in the same sentence ascribed to the blood of the Lamb, and to the moral results of their tribulation, that is, to the meritorious cause, and to the efficacious instrument. In our ordinary logic we are apt to deem one agency exclusive of another. "It is God who works in us," therefore, we conclude we need not work. The logic of Scripture is "Therefore let us work." (2) The natural and uniform tendency of affliction to produce tenderness and sanctity of heart. In the light of human experience we feel no surprise at this sequence of "tribulations and glory," of "light afflictions," and an "exceeding great and eternal weight of glory." And the beatitude that is described here—exemption from hunger and thirst, and all the evils of which they stand as the representatives—is quite congruous to our thoughts and feelings, with the tribulation that preceded. 3. Their worship itself. In heaven they only praise, they sing a new song; the old song of lamentation, the wail of sorrow, the misery of sin is forgotten. (1) Their worship is immediate. The worship of "faith is lost in sight," the worship of symbols in the thing signified; they "see the King in His beauty." (2) It is united and catholic. There is but one robe, one palm, one song, one Father's house, one glorious Model to which all are to be conformed. (3) The constancy of heavenly worship. "They serve Him day and night." "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." God's work hinders not His rest, neither does the service and worship of the glorified. Their praise is but the utterance of their love; and the constant utterance of love is its rest and joy. (4) The fervour of their worship. Oh! how unlike our cold and formal service here—our words, our acts of mechanical conformity, of unspiritual temper, of unloving prompting. (5) Its purity and joy. They who ascribe the heavenly sanctus, themselves are holy. They "see God," because they are "pure in heart." There is no blemish in their sacrifice, no drawback in their joy; they have "come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sadness have fled away." (6) Its perfect satisfaction. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." As on earth, so in heaven, their dependence is on Him; "they live, yet not they, it is Christ who liveth in them." II. Such is the spiritual heaven of our spiritual humanity. OF THE MATERIAL HEAVEN of our material humanity we can say but little, and that only in negations. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." No painful want, no painful infliction, finds its way into that kingdom of blessedness. As it realises all the good that we can crave, it excludes all the evil that we can deprecate. The condition and necessity of probation, and therefore of discipline will be ended; the effects of sin will be destroyed; character will be perfected; reward will be realised; our heavenly Father's hand will wipe every tear from the eye, and pluck every thorn from the heart. Such is the glorious heaven for humanity, both soul and body, which the seer beheld, such the multitude before the throne. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *The heavenly happiness*:—I. IT IS PARTLY CONSTITUTED BY AN EXEMPTION FROM ALL THOSE PAINS AND SORROWS WHICH EMBITTER AND POISON THE CUP OF EARTHLY FELICITY. 1. It is exempted from error, and consequently from suffering upon this account. 2. It is exempted from sin, and all its attendant train of evils. 3. It is exempted from the snares to which we are exposed in this world, and the sufferings to which we are subjected by falling into them. 4. It is exempted from temptations, and all their attendant dangers and mischiefs. 5. It is exempted from the disappointments to which mankind are exposed in this life. 6. It is exempted from the real and unavoidable calamities to which mankind are subjected in this world, and which constitute a large proportion of human misery. II. IT IS COMPLETED BY THE UNION OF ALL THOSE INGREDIENTS WHICH CAN IMPROVE OR SECURE THE BLISS OF THE HEAVENLY INHABITANTS. 1. The vision and enjoyment of God, and the resemblance and conformity of our nature to the Divine. 2. The enlargement of our faculties, and the employment of these upon objects suitable to and worthy of them. 3. A progressive

improvement in knowledge and goodness. 4. The society of angels, and of the spirits of the just made perfect, and especially of those virtuous persons with whom we were, in this world, connected by the ties of reciprocal love and friendship. (*W. Duff, M.A.*) *The redeemed in heaven*:—I. The redeemed in heaven occupy THE MOST ELEVATED POSITION. They are "before the throne." A throne is the emblem of regal authority. In heaven there is—I. A permanent consciousness of the supreme rule. 2. An exalted consciousness of the supreme rule. II. The redeemed in heaven are ENGAGED IN THE GRANDEST SERVICE. "And serve Him day and night." They serve Him in every department of action. III. The redeemed in heaven are BLESSED WITH THE LOFTIEST COMPANIONSHIP. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell amongst them." What will it be to have God—the source of all wisdom, purity, and blessedness—as our constant companion? (*Homilist.*) *The happiness of the saints in heaven*:—I. THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN PERPETUAL COMMUNION WITH GOD IN HIS TEMPLE ABOVE. 1. Let us consider the happiness of the saints in that part of their celestial worship which is internal and spiritual; and in general we must frequently recall to our minds the imperfection of our present discoveries, and remember that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what the Lord hath laid up for them that love Him." There may, for anything we know, be discoveries, and by consequence, acts of worship, and dispositions of mind corresponding to them, totally different in kind from anything we are now capable of, as well as higher in degree. Of these we must be absolutely silent. Whatever acts of worship we have now any experience of shall then be performed to far greater perfection, and with infinitely greater joy. (1) Acts of adoration. By these I understand the immediate contemplation of the glorious excellence of the Divine nature, and the exercise of those affections of soul which correspond to it. (2) Acts of gratitude and praise. (3) Acts of desire. There is much of this in the disposition of the people of God on earth; they say with the prophet (*Isa. xxvi. 8*). And as every agreeable object is the more desired the more it is known, so the clear discovery that is made in heaven of the glory and excellence of God, and the delightful communications of His love, must still increase our desire of further and further degrees of it; and there is a fulness, both in the Divine nature and benignity, that can never be exhausted. (4) Acts of trust and subjection. 2. Let us now consider the worship of the saints in heaven, as it is external and sensible. This is the temple of God in which His servants shall serve Him, in which we may suppose the general assembly of the Church of the first-born meet together for the joint celebration of their Creator and Redeemer's praise. And surely if in this lower world and that part of the creation which is at present subjected to our view, there is so much order and beauty, so much splendour and magnificence, though it be the abode of guilty creatures under manifest tokens of Divine displeasure, what must be the unclouded lustre and perfect beauty of that place where the glory of Almighty God is peculiarly displayed, and which was prepared for the reception of the objects of His special love before the foundation of the world? But the external circumstance which, in my apprehension, will contribute most to the delight and happiness of the saints in their heavenly worship, will be their union and society in it. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *The pleasures of heaven and the service of earth*:—The crucial word of the passage is just the one no person would so think of, viz., "therefore," indicating the connection between life here and hereafter, and showing that the nexus is never broken. I. THAT THEIR SUBMISSION TO A SACRIFICIAL LIFE HAS ITS REWARD IN BESTOWAL OF DIVINE POWER. "He that sitteth upon the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them." It is paradoxical that a sacrifice is the way to a throne and strength. It would be peculiar in any sphere but one. The heart, however, only gains power as it ceases to be free. We must be imprisoned by the mighty power of love before we can be free. How is it refined ladies as hospital nurses can go through scenes which would make men blush? Because they are bound in the fetters of an intense love of humanity. II. THEIR TEMPORARY CRUSHING OF WILL WAS REWARDED BY ITS BEING MADE CHRONIC AND HABITUAL. "Came out of great tribulation," therefore "Serve Him day and night in His temple." The popular idea that calamities of life are sent to prepare us for heaven by way of contrast is pre-eminently false. They are rather sent to prepare us for the life of heaven by resemblance. Heaven is veritably service. A little girl of my acquaintance was the subject of protracted suffering, and, questioned as to her conception of its purpose, surprised me by replying, not in the direction of contrast, but in that of resemblance. "Don't you know," said she, "I am preparing to be a ministering spirit?" It is

coming out of great tribulation which fits us for service. I am much impressed by the fact that the Children of Israel never journeyed when the cloud rested over the tabernacle. Nor should we; but rather rest until the cloud be lifted. III. THEIR SACRIFICIAL LIFE WAS REWARDED BY THEIR RECEIVING A NEW ORGAN OF VISION, viz., a sacrificially pure heart. "They have washed their robes," and have a front pew; "Therefore are they before the throne." If our spirits be bathed in suffering, we shall ever after regard it not as accidental, but as habitual. Sacrifice is the type after which the world is climbing, as illustrated in Abraham on Moriah, Jacob at Bethel, and Moses in Midian. We go to Christ through Egypt and the wilderness of Sinai. We do not expect—or should not—to get new robes, but washed robes. Creation now waits for the seventh morning, which will come when men have "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb." (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) **And serve Him day and night.**—*Service in heaven*:—When you come to think about it your hearts revolt from the heaven which is set forth in the sentimental hymns. Having nothing to do may be very pleasant for a while, but it would be very intolerable for an eternity. Heaven is a place of sweet activities. The redeemed are serving God day and night before His throne. I. The highest life is a LIFE OF PERPETUAL SERVICE. The reward which God confers upon His faithful ones is ability and permission to serve, and when He calls them from the lower to the higher places, the higher honour is that they are enabled and privileged to serve more. In God's view rank is determined by the measure of service. It is strange how the world has reversed this principle in its conceptions of rank and dignity. We speak of service with a sort of disdain, and of servants as inferior persons. You would find thousands of people ashamed to be seen with soiled hands, where you would find one ashamed of living an utterly profitless life. And we often pay the greatest respect to men and women who are of so little good to the world that almost the best service they could render would be to remove themselves out of it as speedily as possible. What a curious spectacle this must present to those who look down upon the earthly life from above. In days to come, when Christ shall truly rule in the hearts of men, they will find it hard to believe that there was ever a time when hats were doffed and knees were bowed to selfish and unserviceable lives. And even now if we look with Christ's eyes, we shall think the most ignorant ploughman who earns his daily bread a far nobler being, and of more exalted rank than the cultured voluptuary who neither uses hands nor brain to serve his fellows and make the world a little better than he found it. We shall honour the meanest workman more than the noblest of society's indolent darlings. We shall be as much ashamed of living unserviceable lives as of being detected in some glaring felony. The homes on earth which most resemble heaven are those in which from the father down to the youngest child, every loved and loving one is serving and being served by each and all; where love is always giving, yet receiving more than it gives; where all are servants, and because servants, masters; where all are happy because all are ministering to the joy of others. II. The highest life is a LIFE OF SERVICE IN THE TEMPLE, or rather of temple service. There is no temple, because it is all temple. And all the service, of whatever kind it is, all the work, all the ministry of love there is emphatically temple service, not necessarily singing, praising, preaching, or anything of that kind, but temple service, because the atmosphere, the thought, the motives, the emotions are sacred, holy, and divine; because everything is done in view of Him who sits upon the throne. There is the very spirit of the sanctuary in it all. There is the gladness and the praisefulness of the sanctuary in it all. And here again we find the model for our lives below. The highest life on earth is a life made up entirely of temple service—a life in which we do all things from the least to the greatest in the same spirit in which we sing hymns and offer prayers honestly, reverently, and purely, as in the sight of God and our Master Jesus Christ. III. The highest life is a LIFE OF WORK INSPIRED BY LOVE, by love and not by necessity. They hunger no more, neither thirst any more. For the Lamb doth feed them and lead them to living fountains of water. We regard labour as a curse because it is a necessity. There is no choice where need drives. It is the hunger and thirst that make us bondsmen. We must toil to satisfy want. But in the highest life they work not to get their needs supplied, but because those needs have been supplied; not to secure wages, but because the wages have been sweetly and abundantly paid; not to make their robes white and clean, but because Christ has washed them until they shine like lustrous snow. In a word their service is inspired by gratitude, devotion, love; and that service never tires. Day and night they serve Him in His temple. Much of our earthly service may be made of this

kind—nay, all of it in a certain sense. In all that we do there may be the willing, thankful, rejoicing spirit, a feeling of infinite indebtedness to God for His great gifts and His great love, which gives, as it were, wings to the feet that are engaged in common labour. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*)

He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.—*The Divine presence in heaven*:—I. HEAVEN IS THE PLACE OF GOD'S SPECIAL PRESENCE. It is the beginning of our happiness to have His presence with us here, and it will be the consummation of it to be for ever with Him in the world to come. The Psalmist took this view of it, for he said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" It is further called "appearing in God's presence"; "standing before Him"; "bowing before His throne"; "abiding in His tabernacle"; "dwelling in His house for ever"; "beholding His face"; "being for ever with the Lord"; "seeing the King in His beauty"; "sitting with Christ on His throne."

II. THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN HEAVEN. On earth the believer enjoys, in a certain sense, the presence of his God. Not only His essential presence, not only His presence in nature, where His wisdom, power, and goodness are clearly displayed; not only His presence in providence in overruling the unbridled passions of men, in improving the framework of society; not only His presence in the appointed means of grace, but a special presence; a presence which he can feel and enjoy, but which he cannot fully explain; a presence which though secret and invisible, is real, influential, and blessed. The presence referred to in the text is more than His essential presence. His essential presence is as really on earth, and in hell, as it is in heaven; for it fills heaven and earth, nor can the heaven of heavens contain it. It is also more than His special gracious presence by His Spirit, for though the saints have this on earth, they are said to be absent from the Lord. The presence of God in the text means—1. A wonderful display of His natural and moral perfections—His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy, with all other attributes which constitute Him such a glorious being. Now in consequence of the weakness of our powers, and the obscurity of providence and other mediums through which they are contemplated, these perfections are but dimly seen and inadequately appreciated in the present state. 2. A wonderful display of His regal glory. He is to dwell among them sitting upon His throne; that is, surrounded with the ensigns of regal glory. (1) It sets forth the absolute sovereignty of God and His dominion over all in heaven, and hence Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, high and lifted up. His sovereignty is seen there in greater perfection and grandeur than anywhere else. (2) It sets forth His peculiar glory and majesty, which are manifested in heaven more luminously than anywhere besides. (3) It sets forth further, that there the deepest homage and respect is paid unto Him. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS PRESENCE IS MANIFESTED. 1. Here we have His presence in creatures, providences, and ordinances; but in heaven He will be seen immediately without the intervention of means. The mind will there be perfectly free from everything which here dims and interrupts its visions of the glory of God. There is no sin there to weaken and becloud its powers, nor any temptation to draw off the affections. There the light of glory has burst in upon the soul, and the perfection of its holiness secures its devout and unceasing contemplation of spiritual realities. The body, too, will then be fashioned like unto the glorified body of Christ; and instead of hindering and beclouding the spirit as it does now, it will greatly aid the soul in her Divine contemplations. And then shadows will be exchanged for realities. 2. He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them, or, as in another place, in the midst of them; so that He is equally accessible to all, and His glory, as from a centre, diffuses its splendours over the whole assembly of heaven. Here some believers live in the sunshine and some in the shade; but it is a most delightful thought that the immediate and distinct vision of God in heaven is not the special privilege of the few, but is common to all that people the realms of bliss, both angels and men. 3. The presence of God in heaven is a fixed and abiding presence, for He shall dwell among them. Not as He frequently does now, like a wayfaring man who only turns aside for the night, but He will be always in our eye, for we shall be ever with the Lord, and shall always behold the face of our Father in heaven. IV. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DIVINE PRESENCE UPON THE ETERNAL STATE OF THE REDEEMED. As the presence of the sun warms, enlightens, fructifies, and blesses the earth; so, only in a far higher and more important sense, does the presence of God shed the most delightful influences upon the whole region and family of heaven. 1. It will advance their moral perfection. 2. It will secure and promote their eternal happiness. The visible and immediate presence of God will banish all that is inconsistent with the progressive

happiness of the redeemed, just as the presence of the sun banishes darkness, coldness, and gloom. Then this immediate presence of God not only banishes all that is opposed to the happiness of the saints, but it is productive of positive happiness. It is the presence of His approving smile that makes heaven, for there He rejoices over His people with joy: He rests in His love, He joys over them with singing. Oh, what bliss to live in the smile of a reconciled God! (*Wm. Gregory.*) *Three tabernacles* (with John i. 14; Rev. xxi. 3):—The word rendered “dwelt,” in these three passages is a peculiar one. It literally means “to dwell in a tent,” or, if we may use such a word, “to tabernacle,” and there is no doubt a reference to the tabernacle in which the Divine presence abode in the wilderness and in the land of Israel before the erection of the temple. I. First, then, we have to think for a moment of THAT TABERNACLE FOR EARTH. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, as in a tent, amongst us.” The human nature, the visible, material body of Jesus Christ, in which there enshrined itself the everlasting Word, which from the beginning was the Agent of all Divine revelation, that is the true temple of God. We have to be content with a recognition that the manner is beyond our fathoming, and to accept the fact, pressed upon our faith that our hearts may grasp it and be at peace. God hath dwelt in humanity. The everlasting Word, who is the forthcoming of all the fulness of Deity into the realm of finite creatures, was made flesh and dwelt among us. But the tabernacle was not only the dwelling place of God, it was also and, therefore, the place of revelation of God. So, in our text, there follows: “we beheld His glory.” And how did that glory make itself known to us? By miracle? Yes! But, blessed be His name, miracle is not the highest manifestation of Christ’s glory and of God’s. The uniqueness of the revelation of Christ’s glory in God does not depend upon the deeds which He wrought. For, as the context goes on to tell, the Word which tabernacled among us was “full of grace and truth,” and therein is the glory most gloriously revealed. Still further, the tabernacle was the place of sacrifice. So in the tabernacle of His flesh He offered up the one sacrifice for sins for ever. In the offering up of His human life in continuous obedience, and in the offering up of His body and blood in the bitter passion of the Cross, He brought men nigh unto God. Therefore, because of all these things, because the tabernacle is the dwelling-place of God, the place of revelation, and the place of sacrifice, therefore, finally is it the meeting place betwixt God and man. In Christ, who by His Incarnation lays His hand upon both, God touches man and man touches God. We who are afar off are made nigh, and in that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man we meet God and are glad. The temple for earth is “the temple of His body.” II. We have THE TABERNACLE FOR THE HEAVENS. In the context we have a vision of the great multitude redeemed out of all nations, and kindreds, “standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.” The palms in their hands give important help towards understanding the vision. We are not to think of the Roman palm of victory, but of the Jewish palm which was borne at the Feast of Tabernacles. What was the Feast of Tabernacles? A festival established on purpose to recall to the minds and to the gratitude of the Jews settled in their own land the days of their wandering in the wilderness. Part of the ritual of it was that during its celebration they builded for themselves booths, or tabernacles of leaves and boughs of trees under which they dwelt, thus reminding themselves of their nomad condition. Now what beauty and power it gives to the words of my text, if we take in this allusion to the Jewish festival. The great multitude bearing the palms are “keeping the feast,” memorial of past wilderness wanderings; and “He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle above them”; as the word might be here rendered. That is to say, He Himself shall build and be the tent in which they dwell; He Himself shall dwell with them in it. He Himself, in closer union than can be conceived of here, shall keep them company during that feast. III. Look at that final vision which we have in these texts, which we may call THE TABERNACLE FOR THE RENEWED EARTH. “Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them.” The climax and the goal of all the Divine working, and the long processes of God’s love for and discipline of the world, are to be this, that He and men shall abide together in unity and concord. That is God’s wish from the beginning. We read in one of the profound utterances of the Book of Proverbs how from the beginning the “delights” of the Incarnate Wisdom which foreshadowed the Incarnate Word “were with the sons of men.” And, at the close of all things, when the vision of this final chapter shall be fulfilled, God will say, settling Himself in the midst of a redeemed humanity, “Lo! here will I dwell, for I have desired it. This is My

rest for ever." He will tabernacle with men, and men with Him. We know not, and never shall know until experience strips the bandages from our eyes, what new methods of participation of the Divine nature, and new possibilities of intimacy and intercourse with Him may be ours when the veils of flesh and sense and time have all dropped away. New windows may be opened in our spirits, from which we shall perceive new aspects of the Divine character. New doors may be opened in our souls from out of which we may pass to touch parts of His nature, all impalpable and inconceivable to us now. And when all the veils of a discordant moral nature are taken away, and we are pure, then we shall see, then we shall draw nigh to God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **They shall hunger no more, neither thirst.**—*Heaven below*:—I. THE PERFECTION OF THE PROVISION which is enjoyed in heaven. 1. The glorified dwell under the shadow of God. It is for this reason that "the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat," because they dwell in God. Oh, what a dwelling-place that will be! 2. Next, we are assured that they shall have all their necessities prevented. "They shall hunger no more." To be supplied when we hunger is the mercy of earth: never to hunger at all is the plenitude of heaven. God shall so fill the souls of His redeemed that they shall have no longings: their longings shall be prevented by their constant satisfaction. 3. Further, as we read we discover a third blessing, namely, that every overpowering influence is attempered—"Neither shall the sun," &c. To us even "our God is a consuming fire" while we are here; but in the saints there remaineth nothing to consume. The light of God is not too bright for eyes that Christ hath touched with heaven's own eyesalve. Blessed, indeed, are they who shall behold the King in the ivory palaces above! 4. When it is added, "Nor any heat," we learn that injurious influences shall cease to operate. By our surroundings here we are troubled with many heats. The very comforts of life, like warm weather, tend to dry us up. A man may have gold, a man may have health, a man may have prosperity and honour till he is withered like the heath in the desert in the day of drought. Unless a dew from the Lord shall rest upon the branch of the prosperous he will be parched indeed. We have need of grace whenever God gives us blessings of a temporal kind. But no heat of that sort shall happen to saints in heaven: they can be rich, and honoured, and perfectly beautiful, and yet under no temptation to self-exaltation. 5. "Neither shall they thirst any more"; they shall feel that the Lord Jesus is such an all-satisfying, all-sufficient portion that their desires can go no further. In the fair haven of the love of God in Christ Jesus shall my spirit abide for ever. II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER. Who is this that feeds them? It is the Lamb. 1. Does it not teach us, first, that our comfort and life must come from our incarnate Saviour—the Lamb? The expression is very peculiar. It is written, "The Lamb shall shepherd them." This is an accurate interpretation. How is that? A shepherd, and that shepherd a Lamb! Here is the truth which the words contain,—He that saves is a man like ourselves. He that provides for His people is Himself one of them—"For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Lamb is their hope, their comfort, their honour, their delight, their glory. 2. Does it not mean more than that? "The Lamb" surely refers to sacrifice. The glorified drink the deepest draughts of delight from the fact that God was made flesh, and that in human flesh He offered perfect expiation for human guilt. 3. "The Lamb" must refer to the meekness of character, the lowliness and condescension of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ on earth was "led as a lamb to the slaughter." He was "meek and lowly in heart." The character of our Lord, then, brings our spirit all that it needs; but yet this is not all: the text speaks of "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne" as feeding them. Think of that, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Can you put these two things together, a sacrifice and a throne? He that stooped to be made sin for us is now supreme sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords. Think of that and be comforted. Our Representative is glorified. Our covenant Head, our second Adam, is in the midst of the throne. III. THE MANNER OF PROVIDING. In two ways the saints in heaven enjoy it—the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them. Go over this, and think first of the feeding of them. The Greek word is "shall shepherdise them." In heaven Jesus is a shepherd ruling over all His flock with a happy, genial, sympathetic sovereignty, to which they yield prompt and glad obedience. Here He has under-shepherds, and He hands out the food by our poor instrumentality; and, alas! sometimes we are found incapable, or forgetful, and the flock is not fed: but it is never so in heaven, for the Lamb Himself maintains the pastorate, and acts the shepherd in

a manner which none of us can emulate. Then it is added, "He shall lead." You may read it, "He shall guide them to fountains of waters of life"; it is but a variation of the same thought. Now, even in heaven the holy ones need guiding, and Jesus leads the way. As eternity goes on, I have no doubt that the Saviour will be indicating fresh delights to His redeemed. "Come hither," saith He to His flock, "here are yet more flowing streams." He will lead them on and on, by the century, aye, by the chiliad, from glory unto glory, onward and upward in growing knowledge and enjoyment. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Heaven above, and heaven below* (with Isa. xlix. 10):—In the New Testament text we have the heavenly state above; and in the Old Testament text we have the state of the Lord's flock while on the way to their eternal rest. Very singular is the sameness of the description of the flock in the field and the flock feeding in the ways. The verses are almost word for word the same. When John would describe the white-robed host, he can say no more of them than Isaiah said of the pilgrim band, led by the God of mercy. I. THE HEAVENLY STATE ABOVE. 1. The supply of every need. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." The unrenewed man is always thirsting; but Christ can stay this even now, for He saith, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." There is not, in all the golden streets of heaven, a single person who is desiring what he may not have, or wanting what he cannot obtain, or even wishing for that which he has not to his hand. Oh, happy state! They are filled with all the fulness of God. 2. The removal of every ill. Thus saith the Spirit, "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." We are such poor creatures that excess of good soon becomes evil to us. Hence we need guarding from dangers which, at the first sight, look as if they were not perilous. 3. The leading of the Lamb. 4. The drinking at the fountain is the secret of the ineffable bliss. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters." We are compelled to thirst at times, and, alas! we stop at the very puddles by the way, and would refresh ourselves at them, if we could. This will never happen to us when we reach the land where flows the river of the water of life. There the sheep drink of no stagnant waters, or bitter wells, but they are satisfied from living fountains of waters. In the home country souls have no need of the means of grace, for they have reached the God of grace. II. THE HEAVENLY STATE BELOW. I think I have heard you saying, "Ah! this is all about heaven; but we have not yet come to it. We are still wrestling here below." Well, if we cannot go to heaven at once, heaven can come to us. Isaiah painted our Lord's sheep in his presence on the way to heaven, and John drew the same flock in the glory with the Lamb: and the fact that the pictures are so much alike is full of suggestive teaching. Here are the same ideas in the same words. 1. First, here is a promise that every want shall be supplied. "They shall not hunger nor thirst." If we are the Lord's people and are trusting in Him, this shall be true in every possible sense. You shall have no anxious thought concerning what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, but, mark you, if you should know the trials of poverty, and should be brought very low in temporal things, yet the Lord's presence and sensible consolations shall so sustain you that spiritually and inwardly you shall know neither hunger nor thirst. Our Lord can so adapt our minds to our circumstances, that the bitter is sweet, and the burden is light. 2. Then, next, there is such a thing as having every evil removed from you while yet in this wilderness. "Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them." Suppose God favours you with prosperity; if you live near to God you will not be rendered proud or worldly-minded by your prosperity. 3. Further, it is said, that on earth we may enjoy the leading of the Lord. See how it is put: "For He that hath mercy on them shall lead them." Here we have not quite the same words as in the Revelation, for there we read, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them." Yet the sense is but another shade of the same meaning. Oh, but that is a sweet name, is it not? "He that hath mercy on them." He has saved them, and so has had mercy on them. Yes, that is very precious, but the word is sweeter still—"He that hath mercy on them," He that is always having mercy on them, He that follows them with mercy all the days of their lives, He that continually pardons, upholds, supplies, strengthens, and thus daily loadeth them with benefits. 4. But now the last touch is the drinking at the spring-head. We were not surprised to find, in our description of heaven, that the Lamb led them to the fountains of waters; but we are delighted to find that, here below, "even by the springs of water shall He guide them." You can even now live upon God Himself, and there is no living comparable to it. You can get beyond all the cisterns, and come to the river of the water of life, even as they do in heaven. To live by second causes

is a very secondary life: to live on the First Cause is the first of living. (*Ibid.*) *All Souls' Day*:—The imagery is Oriental. To a dweller in the East, the first essential is protection from the heat of the sun, and from the radiating heat that pours forth in the evening; the one blasting the energies at noonday, the other enervating the spirits at the coming of the night; and then waters to drink in a thirsty land. 1. Let us, then, enlarge our thought, and say, The life of the dead is a protected life. Think of the great multitude that stands before God to-day. Think of the little children brought into this world all, warped and twisted, so that they never knew how to play. Think of the young that have grown up with the promise of joy, only to see the cup of happiness dashed from their lips. Think of the lives that have been misunderstood—the lives that have gone on day by day doing their duty, sacrificing themselves, seeking only for what was noble and pure and of good report, and all the time misunderstood, unappreciated, without sympathy, left to bear the burden and the heat of the day alone. Think of those who have lain for years and years on the bed of sickness. Think of the women that have borne great burdens—burdens not only of misapprehension, of misunderstanding, but of cruel brutality. Think of the multitudes that have risen day by day only to labour and toil, and have lain down at night too feeble, too weary, too much oppressed, for any thought of God, crushed by the burden and the labour of life. Now the word of St. John is that from all these things they are protected. A life free from care and responsibility, and the burden and heat of the day. This is the first thought that St. John would impress upon us in regard to the life of the dead. Nevermore can those things that are so hard for us light on them. All Souls' Day should be full of joy for the protected life of the dead. But that is not all. "They hunger no more; and the Lamb doth lead them," &c. 2. A life of satisfaction; a life in which every wish and aspiration of the soul is gratified. What a life is that! I like to think of the great multitude of God's children who have entered into that new world and into that new life, seeking such different things because their needs are so different. One soul seeks only for rest; and that is given it. Another soul needs peace and harmony after the long struggle to make peace on earth. Another has been frightened, and longs for the sense of safety, and that is given. Another has all through life been thirsting for the sight of the Eternal Beauty, which no picture, no statue, no flaming of the sky at sunset, could adequately express. "We shall see," said the prophet long ago, speaking for these artistic souls—"we shall see the King in His beauty." Others have found the satisfaction of their souls in "the sound of the harpers playing on the harps." The great multitude whose souls have been stirred by music, and yet in the most glorious symphony, in the noblest chorus, have always felt the human discord that underlay the harmony—there they are satisfied, there the perfect harmony of the Eternal Life soothes, invigorates, and inspires them. Others have laid hold of the tree of the knowledge of life. All through life they hungered for knowledge, and yet all getting of knowledge was the getting also of sorrow. There it is changed. There the tree of life is seen to be the tree of knowledge. Drinking deep of the Divine life, filling themselves with the life of the Lamb of God, these souls have found that not through knowledge did they gain life, but that through life they have gained knowledge. Oh, how wonderful it is to think of this vast expansion of humanity, as the flower expands that has been transplanted into a more genial clime! It is good to think of the lives that are satisfied to-day, as they stand before the throne of God, and are led by the Lamb to the living fountains of waters. The life satisfied; the life rejoicing in the knowledge of the thing that it has dreamed of as impossible; the life rejoicing in the knowledge that every hope that has shot across its sky was the witness of a reality which God had prepared for them that love Him. Full salvation. Sin has fallen away like some filthy garment, and the soul stands in the presence of the King, and the glory of the King clothes it, and it finds its satisfaction in beholding His beauty. And how has all this come to pass? "The Lamb shall lead them forth." The spirit of Jesus is typified by the Lamb. The spirit of perfect sacrifice is meant by the Lamb. And that spirit has entered into the lives of these men and women and children. It is the new spirit that has taken possession of them in the new life that has made the protection and the eternal satisfaction. It opens up before us the thought of the endless progress of the dead. They are being led by the Lamb. And now turn back from this picture of the life of the dead to that other one with which we are so much more familiar, which we may call the death of the living. We are not protected. On us the sun does light and the heat does burn; with us the sorrow

and sin, and suffering and pain, and misunderstanding and cruel suspicion, and unkindness and weariness, and discouragement and hopelessness exist. How sad it all is! How dark the picture is, as compared with the glory that is revealed by the other! And I think it is because of this picture, that men so often ask themselves, Things being as they are, how is it possible that the dead should have perfect joy? Now St. John entered into that mystery. And he has not pretended that their joy is complete. He did believe that their life was protected. He did believe that they were being satisfied day by day, because they were following the Lamb. But he adds, "God shall wipe away all tears from off their faces." Tears! Yes, tears in that glorious life—tears must be there, because of the incompleteness of human life. It is inevitable that they should sorrow. It is no less inevitable that their sorrow should be comforted of God. Only standing before the throne of God there comes the eternal comfort that must always come with the remembrance of power and wisdom and goodness. And so their tears are wiped away. It is not a life without sorrow. It is a life comforted of God. And what is their word to us? It is—Follow the Lamb. Strive to have the spirit of Jesus Christ. For they that have that spirit have now the foretaste of the life of the dead. Follow the Lamb, for in following Him and striving to have His spirit there comes the satisfaction that the soul can find in no other way; and all the joy and beauty and glory of life is found to have its interpretation and its full realisation in the beauty of the life of Jesus Christ. (*Leighton Parks, D.D.*)

The Lamb . . . shall feed them.—*The eternal folding of the flock*:—I. THE SHEPHERD. It is evidently the vision of a pastoral scene which is now in the eye of the Apostle of Patmos. 1. The description implies that there will be a continual remembrance on the part of the ransomed of the death and sufferings of their Shepherd. A Lamb slain! Strange symbol, in the place where suffering never enters, and death is unknown! 2. A second truth we may gather from this figure of the Lamb leading the ransomed in the heavenly world is, the perpetuity of Christ's exalted human nature. It is not as a kingly Shepherd He leads, but as one of the flock Himself—wearing their nature. He is, and ever will be "that same Jesus," unchanged and unchangeable. II. Let us pass now from the glorified LEADER to the glorified FLOCK. 1. All the joys of the ransomed flock will be associated with the love and companionship of their Shepherd. He feeds—He leads—He wipes away all tears from their eyes; and in a previous verse (15), under a different figure, it is said, "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." Heaven would be no heaven without Jesus. "Leading" them, "feeding" them,—wiping the very tear-drops from their eyes. What figurative language could express more intimate fellowship and communion! The fellowship of the believer and his Saviour on earth—alas! how fitful, intermittent, transient! "In Thy presence there is fulness of joy." 2. This description would seem to denote an infinite progression in the joys and felicities of the ransomed flock. The Shepherd is seen leading them from pasture to pasture, from fountain to fountain, higher and yet higher up the hills of God. The heavenly pilgrim will be attaining ever new views of God—new unfoldings, and revelations of the Divine purposes—new motives for the ceaseless activities of his holy being. Heaven will thus, in the language of the old divines, be "a rest without a rest." "They rest." "They rest not." 3. The figurative language of the evangelist further indicates that there will be an unfolding of the Shepherd's wisdom and faithfulness in His earthly dispensations. God is represented as wiping away all tears from their eyes. As if, when they entered glory, some lingering tears were still there. As if the eye had not recovered from the night of earthly weeping. As in a forest, after a drenching thunder-shower, every bough, and blade, and leaf is dripping with rain; for a considerable time after the sun has shone out, and the sky is blue, and the birds of the grove are singing, the lingering drops gem the branches and sprinkle the sward. But the sun is up: and his genial rays are drinking up the moisture—nature's tear-drops. One by one they evaporate, slowly, gradually; and the refreshed forest rejoices, and basks in the sun's radiance. So with the great Sun of Deity in heaven. One by one earth's remaining tears vanish before the radiance of that Sun of Wisdom and Love. 4. Yet once more, this description would seem to indicate that there will be a variety and diversity in the joys of Heaven, suited to the various capacities and tastes of the redeemed. It is not to one fountain to which the Lamb is said to lead them; they are "living fountains of waters." Like the four-branched river in the first earthly Eden, there will be, from the one great river of Deity, streams which make glad the city of God. The pastures will be different. We delight to think of the flock of heaven—each

member of it perfect in the full measure of its own bliss—but each under the Shepherd's eye, thus following the pasture, or climbing the mountain-steep, or browsing by the streamlet, it most loves. And yet all the fold, in these separate and distinctive ways, combining to glorify their Shepherd-King. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) **God shall wipe away all tears.**—*No more tears:*—The principal sources of the tears shed upon earth by those whose character resembles that of the multitude whom John beheld may be reduced under the four following heads: I. The firmest spirit is liable to be discomposed by THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT INTIMATE CONNECTION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE BODY. Life is often embittered by a constitutional debility, or by accidental violence; by the acute pains of some diseases, by the effects of those exertions and indulgences that were prompted by health and vigour; and by the growing infirmities of years of that dissolution from which nature recoils. But they who are before the throne of God have received, in place of the earthly house of this tabernacle, a building of God. II. Independently of bodily distress, WE ARE EXPOSED TO NUMBERLESS SORROWS BY THE DEGREE IN WHICH EXTERNAL OBJECTS AFFECT OUR HAPPINESS. Many are hardly able with sweat and toil to earn that measure of the good things of life which is necessary for subsistence. Some fail in every scheme which they form to better their fortunes: at one time, the visitation of heaven, at another, the imprudence, the treachery, or the malice of man, snatches from them the fruit of their labours. But when the great plan of the Divine government with regard to the human race shall be accomplished, there will be no further need for that seemingly unequal dispensation, which, although the source of many tears, is, in mercy and love, employed by the Father of mankind, to administer correction to their vices, to afford a trial and a display of their virtues, and to carry forward purposes too important and too remote for their apprehension. The sufferings of the righteous will no longer form part of that discipline which the imperfection of human nature requires; nor will the unmerited success of the wicked be continued, as an instrument of good to those to whom it appears to bring evil. III. A third source from which the tears of good men flow is THAT KIND AFFECTION WHICH GOD, WHO IS LOVE, HATH PLANTED IN THE HUMAN BREAST. Although this principle be the solace of life, although it create those pleasing attentions and toils without which the repetition of the same scenes would become wearisome, and the labour of life intolerable; yet, in the mixed state in which we are called to exercise kind affection, it multiplies our cares and anxieties, and it often fills our hearts with anguish. The objects of our affection are not allowed to remain with us always, and there is no time when we hold them secure. The living sometimes inflict the most cruel wounds upon an affectionate heart. But the tears which flow from the distresses, the departure, or the improper behaviour of others, shall be wiped away from the eyes of those who are before the throne. In the city of the living God there is no affliction that demands the tribute of sympathy from those who are unable to give any other relief; no depraved mind that proves unworthy of the affection of which it had once been the object; no painful separation of kindred spirits; the people are all righteous, and the pure spiritual joy of righteousness and benevolence gladdens the whole company of the redeemed. IV. If the servants of God were able in this state to attain the perfection of virtue, they might bear with composure bodily distress, the difficulties of their outward state, BUT THE BEST OF THE CHILDREN OF MEN ARE BOWED DOWN UNDER THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VAIN THOUGHTS, OF IDLE WORDS, AND OF UNPROFITABLE ACTIONS. But God shall wipe away the tears of sin from the eyes of those who, knowing this bitterness, do indeed hunger and thirst after righteousness; for the day is coming when they shall be faultless. There will then be no sophistry to mislead the understanding, no false appearance of good to excite improper desires, no example of vice to allure imitation; there will then be no remainder of corruption to afflict and humble the spirit, no grovelling appetite to war against the soul, no mean passion to tarnish the beauty of holiness. Conclusion: 1. If all tears are to be wiped away hereafter, it follows that religion does not profess to wipe them away here. 2. If we believe that the time is coming when our tears shall be wiped away, let us prize the gospel of Christ, which hath given us this blessed hope. 3. This description of the happiness of heaven, like every other which the Scriptures contain, reminds us of the necessity of a virtuous life. (*G. Hill, D.D.*) *The ministry of tears:*—1. It is the ministry of tears to keep this world from being too attractive. You and I would be willing to take a lease of this life for a hundred million years, if there were no trouble. After a man has had a good deal of trouble, he says, "Well, I am ready to go. If there is a house somewhere

whose roof doesn't leak, I would like to live there. If there is an atmosphere somewhere that does not distress the lungs, I would like to breathe it. If there is a society somewhere where is no tittle-tattle, I would like to live there. If there is a home-circle somewhere where I can find my lost friends, I would like to go there."

2. It is the ministry of trouble to make us feel our complete dependence upon God. We lay out great plans, and we like to execute them. It looks big. God comes and takes us down. As Prometheus was assaulted by his enemy, when the lance struck him it opened a great swelling that had threatened his death, and he got well. So it is the arrow of trouble that lets out great swellings of pride. We never feel our dependence upon God until we get trouble. We do not know our own weakness, or God's strength, until the last plank breaks. It is contemptible in us, when there is nothing else to take hold of, that we catch hold of God only. 3. It is the ministry of tears to capacitate us for the office of sympathy. The priests under the old dispensation were set apart by having water sprinkled on their hands, feet, and head; and by the sprinkling of tears people are now set apart to the office of sympathy. Where did Paul get the ink with which to write his comforting Epistle? Where did David get the ink to write his comforting Psalms? Where did John get the ink to write his comforting Revelation? They got it out of their own tears. When a man has gone through the curriculum, and has taken a course of dungeons, and imprisonments, and shipwrecks, he is qualified for the work of sympathy. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Heaven tearless:—In heaven there are—I. NO ANXIETIES. In that world there is "no more curse." There, too, sickly bodies will never be seen. There the head shall languish and ache no more. The eyes shall no longer refuse to see, nor the ears to listen. There no paralysis cripples. There no nerves tremble and are afraid. The inhabitant of that bright city shall no more say, "I am sick." There all labour and anxiety for provision for yourselves and families will be ended. II. NO BEREAVEMENTS. Our Saviour tells you that, if you are amongst "the children of the resurrection," you and your departed relatives who loved Christ shall meet again, and that thenceforward neither they nor you will "die any more." There are no graves in heaven. III. NO SIN IN OTHERS. IV. NO SIN IN OURSELVES. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*)

No tears in heaven:—I. TEARS ARE TO FILL THE EYES OF BELIEVERS UNTIL THEY ENTER THE PROMISED REST. How numerous, too, are the tears of unbelief! We manufacture troubles for ourselves by anticipating future ills which may never come. Tears of repentance, we cannot carry thither with us. Tears for Christ's injured honour. These are holy drops, but they are all unknown in heaven. Tears of sympathy: when we "weep with those that weep" we do well; these are never to be restrained this side the Jordan.

II. EVEN HERE IF WE WOULD HAVE OUR TEARS WIPE AWAY WE CANNOT DO BETTER THAN REPAIR TO OUR GOD. He is the great tear wiper. God can remove every vestige of grief from the hearts of His people by granting them complete resignation to His will. Our selfhood is the root of our sorrow. He can also take away our tears by constraining our minds to dwell with delight upon the end which all our trials are working to produce. He can show us that they are working together for good. Moreover, He can take every tear from our eye in the time of trial by shedding abroad the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts more plentifully. He can make it clear to us that Christ is afflicted in our affliction. The Lord can also take away all present sorrow and grief from us by providentially removing its cause. Providence is full of sweet surprises and unexpected turns. Still, the surest method of getting rid of present tears, is communion and fellowship with God. III. THE REMOVAL OF ALL TEARS FROM THE BLESSED ONES ABOVE. 1. All outward causes of grief are gone. Poverty, famine, distress, nakedness, peril, persecution, slander, all these shall have ceased. 2. Again, all inward evils will have been removed by the perfect sanctification wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. No evil of heart, of unbelief in departing from the living God, shall vex them in Paradise; no suggestions of the arch enemy shall be met and assisted by the uprisings of iniquity within. 3. All fear of change also has been for ever shut out. They know that they are eternally secure. Saints on earth are fearful of falling. No such fears can vex the blessed ones who view their Father's face. 4. Why should they weep, when every desire is gratified? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1-13. The seventh seal. . . silence in heaven.—*The silence of heaven :—*

I. THE SILENCE OF MEDITATION. There is a blessing, which we know not yet, in thought. In this busy human life it is hard to think. "The world is too much with us." It drowns the "still small voice" of God. But in heaven thought will no more be disturbed. There will be no unsolved perplexities, no distracting fancies. The plan of Creation and Redemption will be unfolded. The discords of earth will be resolved in the celestial harmony. II. THE SILENCE OF ADORATION. When we see God as He is, we shall praise Him as we ought. The cloud which spreads between Him and us shall be done away. We shall enter into that rapture of worship which finds no voice in words. Our soul will lose itself in the infinite bliss of communion with Him who is its Father and its God. III. THE SILENCE OF FRUITION. All the voices of earth are only so many cryings for something that is not of earth, but of heaven. They are expressions of a Divine dissatisfaction with the limitations of our human life. Is there not something that we all desire and cry out for—to be rich, perhaps, or successful, or happy, or good? And will it not always be a desire, never fulfilled? Could the dearest wish of our heart be granted to-day, another wish, still dearer, would arise to-morrow. Every new day dawns with a fresh purity upon our lives, but in the evening it is stained with failure and sin. We are always sighing for a holiness which is always unattained and unattainable. Nay, the blessings which God gives us do not last long. Over all our life there hangs the shadow of death. We are always dreading to speak that saddest, tenderest word on earth, "Farewell." There is "silence in heaven," because there is no loss nor any boding fear of parting still to come. They who live in the Divine Presence are sheltered from the storms of time. They are safe for ever and ever. (*J. E. C. Welldon, M.A.*) *Thirty minutes in heaven :—*I. GOD AND ALL HEAVEN THEN HONOURED SILENCE. The full power of silence many of us have yet to learn. We are told that when Christ was arraigned "He answered not a word." That silence was louder than any thunder that ever shook the world. Ofttimes, when we are assailed and misrepresented, the mightiest thing to say is to say nothing, and the mightiest thing to do is to do nothing. II. HEAVEN MUST BE AN EVENTFUL AND ACTIVE PLACE. It could afford only thirty minutes of recess. The celestial programme is so crowded with spectacle that it can afford only one recess in all eternity and that for a short space. III. THE IMMORTALITY OF A HALF-HOUR. Oh, the half-hours! They decide everything. I am not asking what you will do with the years or months or days of your life, but what of the half-hours. Tell me the history of your half-hours, and I will tell you the story of your whole life on earth and the story of your whole life in eternity. Look out for the fragments of time. They are pieces of eternity. IV. MY TEXT SUGGESTS A WAY OF STUDYING HEAVEN SO THAT WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND IT. The word "eternity" that we handle so much is an immeasurable word. Now, we have something that we can come nearer to grasping, and it is a quiet heaven. When we discourse about the multitudes of heaven, it must be almost a nervous shock to those who have all their lives been crowded by many people, and who want a quiet heaven. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Silence in heaven :—*Are such seasons of quietude—of calm and holy anticipation—needful to be observed there—and shall we wonder that they are appointed unto us here? You will observe that to almost all things there are these parentheses. Nature very seldom does her work without a cessation, where all seems lost and dead. A winter always lies between the autumn sowing and the spring-time shooting. There are very few providences which happen to man without delays, which seem as if they had broken their courses. Promises seem very slow of foot in their travel. And it is generally long to our feelings—after the prayer has gone up—before the answer falls. Peace does not always come quickly—even to the strongest faith. And grace does not succeed to grace—nor to joy—in one unbroken series. Life is full of pause. And these prefaces of God's works—these introductions—these heraldings of the great approaches—these subduings of soul—these times to make ready: they are only the reflections of that which St. John saw passing within the veil: "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Let us cultivate the heavenly power of "silence." Let us pray for the angelic gift of "silence." It is what we all want. There are many voices—in continuous stream—speaking in the world; some from within, some from without; voices in the sublime and in the lofty things around us; voices in

very common things, and every little passing event; but you do not hear them. Why? There is not "silence" enough in the breast. Be more still. Listen for the whispers of God, and see whether earth, and heaven, and your own heart also, do not talk sweetly to you all the day, and all the night, about spiritual things! I advise every one—who wishes to be a true worshipper, and to improve his communion with God—to exercise complete "silence." The spiritual life would often be much the better for more of a devout "silence." May it not be that there is, sometimes, more filial love and confidence in the prayer that does not speak, and cannot speak, than in any oral prayer? And there are some seasons which specially invite the piety of "silence." Such a time is those early days of deep sorrow: "I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." Such a time is the waiting, before we begin some work that God has given us to do for Him—like the wilderness to Moses, or Elijah in Horeb. Such a time is the moment spent with God before we make an answer. Such a time is the few minutes before prayer; or before a service here; or before the Holy Communion. Such a time may be at the gates of glory. For it is a pleasant thing to pass the threshold of eternity "silently." Does not God—for this very reason—make His children go through—one after another—alone? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Soul-silence:—I. Soul-silence often FOLLOWS GREAT EXCITEMENT. From the storms of remorse, secular anxieties, and social bereavements, the soul of the genuinely Christly arises into a "peace that passeth all understanding."

II. Soul-silence is often found ABSORBING WORSHIP. 1. The prayers of saints on earth are of great practical interest in the spiritual universe. (1) They are offerings that are acceptable to its Supreme Ruler. (2) In rendering them acceptable to God, His highest spiritual ministers are deeply engaged. 2. The prayers of saints on earth exert an influence on the things of time. III. Soul-silence often SPRINGS FROM HIGH EXPECTANCY. What wonderful things are before us all! Were we earnestly waiting for the "manifestation of the sons of God," waiting the advent of Him who is to wind up the affairs of the world, how silent should we be! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Silence:—I. THE SILENCE OF SUPPRESSION. "While I kept silence," David says; that is, while I suppressed my sense of sin, and sought to check and coerce the tide of free confession. This is the silence of our fallen nature; our abuse of God's gift, bestowed upon us for a very different end. If any of us are thus silent to God, let not night close upon us without breaking that silence: if conscience accuses us of sin, let it be heard while it may: if any iniquity of ours is separating between us and God, bring it to Him, and spare it not, that it may be forgiven for Christ's sake, and its chain removed from us by His Holy Spirit.

II. THE SILENCE OF CONVICTION. First there has been that sullen silence of which we have spoken; the heart locked up, and refusing to empty itself of its secret. Then, many times, the first silence has been broken by prevarications, excuses, and self-justifications, going perhaps even to the length of direct falsehood. Then, in process of time, by patient hearing and inquiry, these also have been broken down: the false tongue has been confuted by the force of truth, and every refuge of lies has at length been swept away. When this is so, then at last there is silence; refreshing by comparison, and, in this life, certainly in young life, hopeful; till it comes, there is no hope, because the soul is still trying to say Peace to itself fallaciously. But now there is silence: now may punishment try its remedial power, being accompanied, as it ever ought to be, with a full forgiveness. Now, too, may the sinner, humbled in himself, before others, and before God, listen with livelier interest to the assurance of God's forgiveness, to the comfort of the blood of sprinkling which speaks not to reproach but to console.

III. THE SILENCE OF PREPARATION. Every real, certainly every great, work of man is prefaced by a long silence, during which the mind is concentrated upon the object, and possessing itself with that which is afterwards to be produced. What is all study but the preliminary to some work, or else to one's life's work? It is not in man to be capable of always giving out, without long processes of taking in. This is the secret of so many barren and unfruitful ministries, that men are trying to dispense with silence: they are altogether in public, never in solitude: they are counting their exertions, instead of weighing them, satisfied if they are always labouring, without forcing themselves to prepare for labour by silent study, by silent meditation, by silent prayer. IV. THE SILENCE OF ENDURANCE; that of him who with a noble self-restraint refuses to avail himself even of a plea which might avail for his deliverance. He is following the example of One who Himself in the very crisis of His earthly fate exhibited in its fullest glory the dignity and the

majesty of silence. V. THE SILENCE OF DISAPPROBATION; that silence by which, perhaps most effectively of all, whether in the society of the young or of the old, a Christian enters his protest against wrong, and acts as a witness for the truth. Who has not seen the effect of silence, of a Christian, a consistent silence, upon uncharitable or wicked conversation? Before the presence of disapprobation, however unobtrusive, evil soon shrinks, cowers, and withdraws itself. VI. THE SILENCE OF SELF-RESTRAINT, general and habitual, or else special and particular. VII. THE SILENCE OF SORROW, AND OF SYMPATHY WITH SORROW. 1. Grief may forget itself (as it is called) for the moment in society, and sorrow for sin may spend itself—alas! it often does—in fruitless and only half-explicit confessions and lamentations to man: but these are dangerous as well as vain remedies. In either case, be silent; only add the words, silent before God. Let Him hear all from you, and, to speak generally, none else. 2. I spoke, too, of the silence of sympathy. Who has not suffered from the officiousness of a talking sympathy? VIII. THE SILENCE OF AWE, THE SILENCE OF MEDITATION, THE SILENCE OF PRAYER, YES, THE SILENCE OF PRAISE. IX. THE SILENCE OF DEATH. The silence of death may reign around the bed from which a living soul has departed and on which a dead body lies alone. But it reigned first in the departing soul itself. At what particular point in the illness isolation began, and the presence of friends was no longer felt in the dying, varies no doubt with the nature of the disease, and certainly can by none be defined: but well may it be seen that after a certain point silence and solitude have taken possession, that there is, to all intents, an abstraction from things around, and an absorption in things within. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Silence*:—What is silence? Not the absence, the negation of speech, but the pause, the suspension of speech. Speech is, we all admit, one of God's choicest gifts to man, for the employment of which man is specially and awfully responsible. Must not something of the like sacredness and responsibility belong to that correlative power—the power of silence? As if to impress this truth upon our minds, Scripture invests silence with circumstances of peculiar interest and awe. Thus, when Solomon dedicated the Temple to Jehovah, after that the priests had arranged all the sacred furniture, and completed the solemn service of consecration, there was silence, and during that silence the glory of the Lord, in the form of a cloud, so filled the whole building that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud. Thus, again, in the text, when the angel "had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Very wonderful and mysterious is this instance of silence. It was as though, upon the opening of the mystic seal, events so strange and amazing were to follow throughout the universe, that the very hosts of heaven were compelled to suspend their worship and adoration in order to behold and listen! Now, the first sort of silence to which I would call your attention is the silence of worship, of awe, and reverence. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." Such is the canon for worship laid down by Habakkuk; and it is a canon as much binding upon us as upon those to whom it was originally addressed. When we come up to the house of prayer, there to meet Christ upon the mercy-seat—there to hear His voice speaking to us in the read and spoken Word—there to receive Him into our very souls in the Sacrament of His broken Body and shed Blood—we are bound to observe the silence of awe and reverence. Except when we open our lips to join in prayer and praise to God, our attitude within these hallowed walls should be that of silence, of those who are impressed with the sanctity of the place, and who know and feel that the Almighty God is indeed in their midst. Yes; and it would be well, could we put more of this holy silence into our religious acts. Our religion shares too much in the faults of the age in which we live. It is too public, too outspoken, conducted too much as a business; and so the inner and contemplative element is too much lost sight of. The silence of self-examination, the silence of the heart's unsyllabled supplication, the silence of meditation on the mysteries of redeeming love—these are forms of silence which every one must observe often who would have the flame of spiritual life to burn bright and clear in his soul. Then, again, there is the silence of preparation. Every great work that has ever been achieved has been preceded by this—the doer making himself ready, by thought and study, for action. Every great achievement, whether in the moral or the intellectual world, has been in a sense like Solomon's temple—it has risen noiselessly, silently, without sound of axe or hammer. Therefore is that great primary act in religion—the conviction of sin—invariably preceded by deep and solemn silence, while the sinner stands before God self-accused and self-condemned.

Therefore, also, is silence ever present at all the more solemn passages of our life. Sorrow—real, genuine sorrow—is ever silent. A cry—a tear—what relief would these be; but they must not intrude into the sacred ground of sorrow, the sorrow of the just—bereaved widow or orphan. And so, too, sympathy with sorrow is ever silent. Idle words, or still idler tears—these are for false comforters, like those who troubled the patriarch Job; the true sympathy is the sympathy of a look—of the presence of silence, not of uttered consolation. And now think of that last silence—a silence that we must all experience, and for which, by silence, we must prepare now—the silence of death. What exactly the silence of death is, none but the dying can know. May we have known what it was, day by day, to be many times alone with that God who must then be alone with us, to judge or else to save. (*Charles H. Collier, M.A.*) *Silence in heaven*:—Whatever judgments come down upon the region below, they are seen by the apostle to be the consequences of activities in the region above. No stroke falls on earth that is not directed in heaven. The two worlds move in concert. The time-accomplishments of one world correspond to the time-appointments of another. We have set before us, in unmistakable symbolism, this truth—That in the developments of God's plans in providence, there are times of comparative quietude, during which it seems as if the progress of things was stayed awhile. I. WHAT IS INTENDED WHEN WE SPEAK OF PROGRESS BEING APPARENTLY STAYED? There are in the Word of God great promises and prophecies which open up a glorious vision for the future days. There have been also great events which have excited in the Church of God the strongest hopes, and which ever and anon form a restful background. To such periods there succeed long years in which either no appreciable advance is made towards the inbringing of the new heavens and the new earth; or if in one direction some progress appears, in another the cause of righteousness seems checked afresh by new developments of error, folly, and sin. The prophets of God are crying, "Flee from the wrath to come." They long for some manifestation of Divine power to startle man. But no. Man goes on sinning. And our God seems a God that "does nothing" (Carlyle). The thunder is rolled up. The lightning is sheathed. There is a prolonged lull. There is "silence in heaven." The sceptic makes use of the quietude to ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" The careless one settles down at his ease, and cries, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come." Hollow professors desert in crowds, and go over to the ranks of the enemy. And still—still there is "silence in heaven." No voice is heard from the invisible realms to break in upon the steady course of this earth's affairs, or to arouse and convict a slumbering world! II. WHAT DOES THIS SILENCE MEAN? What does it mean? 1. Negatively. (1) It does not mean that this world of ours is cut adrift in space, or that the human family are left fatherless and lone. (2) Nor does it mean that time is being lost in the development of the plans of God. Catastrophes are not the only means of progress. (3) Nor does it imply that God is indifferent to the sin which He is ever witnessing. "The Lord is not slack," &c. (4) Nor does it imply that God is working on any other plan than that which He has laid down in the book. (5) Nor does the silence mean that God will ultimately let sinners escape with impunity (Rom. ii. 3, 4). 2. Positively. (1) We are not to expect startling providences at every turn of life. (2) We are to be guided more by what God says than by what we see before our eyes. The book gives principles which are eternal. (3) There are other sides to, and other forms of, God's working than those which startle and alarm. (4) By the silence of heaven God would test His people's faith, and quicken them to more fervent prayer. (5) God would thus teach us to study principles rather than to gaze on incident. III. WHAT SHOULD THIS SILENCE TEACH US? AND WHAT EFFECT UPON US SHOULD IT HAVE? 1. Let us learn anew to exercise faith in the spiritual power which God wields by His Spirit, rather than in the material energy which shakes a globe. 2. Let us use heaven's time of keeping silence as a time for breaking ours (Isa. lxii. 1, 6, 7). 3. Let the ungodly make use of the space given for repentance, by turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. 4. Let us lay to heart the certain fact, that, although judgment is delayed, come it will. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **The seven angels . . . seven trumpets.**—*Trumpets*:—1. These seven angels stand waiting before the throne, and till they be called to the service that is subjoined, they go not: teaching men who are so called to wait in like manner for the Lord's vocation of them, and not to run before they be sent. 2. Those who are thus called have trumpets given them: even so whom the Lord calls and

sends out to any work, He furnishes them with gifts meet for the work, which neither man nor angel can have until the same be given them from above. 3. By trumpets the Lord forewarns the world of the judgments to come upon them, before they come, that they might repent: wherein the great mercy of God is seen to the very wicked, forewarning them to flee from His wrath to come. 4. As by the trumpets of these angels He forewarned the world, even so does He yet by the ministry of those who are called angels, and by the trumpets of the law and gospel (Isa. lviii. 1). (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*) *The trumpet-symbol*:—I. GOD HAS A MESSAGE FOR US. II. THE MANNER OF THAT MESSAGE. Such truths as these are suggested by this trumpet-symbol. 1. How urgent! It is no mere matter of indifference, but life and death hang upon it. 2. How warlike! The trumpet-note was emphatically the music of war. 3. How terrible! The hosts of Midian fled in dismay when the blast of Gideon's trumpet burst on their startled ears. And God's Word is terrible to those who know Him not. The Bible is a dreadful book to the impenitent man when awakened, as one day he will be, to his real condition before God. 4. How animating to the hearts of the people of God! God's Word is full of heart-cheering truth to all them that trust in Him. 5. How joyful was the sound when it proclaimed, as so often the trumpet did, the advent of some glad festival, some "acceptable year of the Lord," the jubilee especially! 6. How irresistible is the trumpet-sound! The lofty, massive walls of Jericho fell down flat before the trumpet-blast. (*S. Conway, B.A.*)

Vers. 3-5. **Much incense.**—*The all-fragrant incense*:—I. THE ANGEL AND THE ALTAR. It is the altar that stood in the holy place that is here referred to in the third verse, not the brazen altar; it is the golden altar, the altar of incense; the altar of prayer and praise; the altar at which the priests ministered, and where also blood was sprinkled. In what respects it differed from the mercy-seat (as the place of prayer) does not quite appear. At this altar all who are God's priests, all His royal priesthood, officiate. Here specially they stand, as pleaders with God, as intercessors on behalf of His own or against His enemies. To this altar the angel comes (not one of the seven), and here he takes his stand for a special purpose. II. THE ANGEL AND THE CENSER. He comes to act as priest; a priestly messenger from God. III. THE ANGEL AND THE INCENSE. It is no empty censer that he holds; it is not for show that he waves it. Incense is there; incense not his, but supplied by another, though by whom is not said. "There was given him." It is much incense, or, literally, "many incenses," out of which were to come innumerable wreaths of fragrant smoke. IV. THE ANGEL AND THE FIRE. The angel having emptied the censer of its incense, fills it with fire; the pouring out of the one from the censer being the signal for the coming in of the other into that vessel from which the incense had been poured out. 1. Prayer remains often long unanswered. The reasons for the long delay are often far beyond our reach; but in the end they will be found infinitely wise and gracious. 2. Prayer is not lost. It lies on "the golden altar which is before the throne." We lay each petition there, as we say, "for Christ's sake." 3. Prayer will be answered. Delay will only add to the fulness of the answer, and increase our joy when it comes. And it will come. He is faithful that promised. He cannot deny Himself. 4. The answer will come in connection with Christ's surpassing excellence. His fragrance is to be cast upon these long-lying prayers, that seem without life or motion, and they shall arise. 5. Prayer is often answered in ways we little thought of. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Our prayers presented in heaven*:—I. THE EMPLOYMENT IN WHICH PIOUS MEN ARE STATED TO ENGAGE. 1. Prayer is the habit by which pious men on earth are always prominently distinguished. There is not one in the universe of our intelligent race who is not under obligation to pray. While men in the alienation of unconverted nature violate the obligation, and indulge in passions and in habits which are utterly incompatible with its performance, men on the other hand, who have been the subject of renovating influence, are, from the moment of receiving it, imbued with the principles and with the instincts of prayer. 2. Prayer thus distinguishing pious men is directed for important and comprehensive objects. It commonly has respect to temporal objects, craving the communication of temporal benefits. But these must always be secondary, and should be desired with a reservation to the Divine wisdom as to whether it will be for our well-being or for our disadvantage to receive them. And then the prayers of the saints, when rightly offered, must not merely be personal, directed to their own welfare, but intercessory, directed to the welfare of others. 3. Prayer thus distinguishing pious men, and directed for

important and comprehensive objects, is always attended by peculiar characteristics—humility; a deep conviction of insignificance in the presence of a God so great, and of impurity in the presence of a God so holy. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THAT EMPLOYMENT IS COMMENDED BEFORE GOD. An angel is represented as coming and standing at the altar; “and there was given unto him much incense,” &c. 1. Observe, first, the person. There is satisfactory evidence to identify the Saviour with the angel who is here presented to us. It is He who takes the prayers of the saints and presents them before the throne. 2. Notice the station. He is represented as coming and standing at the altar, “having a golden censer,” and the altar, moreover, is described as “the golden altar.” The Jewish priest could not stand by the altar of incense unless he had first of all offered an atonement for sin: and when there is a vision of our Lord Jesus as the High Priest of our profession standing by the golden altar, the necessary assumption is, that He too had first offered an atonement for sin. 3. Observe the act. It is stated that there was given to Him much incense, that He might offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. Here, then, is the exercise of the Saviour’s office of Intercessor in identification with the prayers of the saints; and it is a most sublime and a most thrilling thought, that there is no prayer offered in humility, faith, and earnestness, for objects which are coincident with the Word of God, but what is borne upward and presented by the Saviour before the throne of the heavenly Father. And whether prayer be offered in the midnight darkness or in the noontide light—whether prayer be offered in the secret chamber or in the public assembly—whether prayer be offered in the mansion or in the cottage, in the prison-house or in the palace, in the tropics or at the poles, it rises upward, becomes interwoven and identified with the much incense of the Saviour’s merits, and so penetrates into the very holiest of all. III. THE RESULT IN WHICH THE EMPLOYMENT SO COMMENDED MUST TERMINATE. 1. The success of the prayers of the saints is invariable. The success of the prayers presented on this occasion is indicated by the expression that “the smoke of the furnace ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.” The ascent of the prayers, mingled with the incense, out of the hand of the angel before God is intended to signify its acceptance. May we not deduce this fact from the Divine nature of our Redeemer? Is not His will one with the will of the Father? and must not what He deigns to present in His condescension as Mediator before the Father be accepted by the Father in connection with Himself? Then, again, may not this fact be deduced from the value of the atonement which He has offered upon the Cross? Is that defective? Is that presented with doubt and uncertainty in the presence-chamber of the celestial palace? Has it not been sealed by His resurrection from the dead, and by His ascension into heaven and His enthronement in royalty there? Is it possible for the Intercessor to plead His atonement in vain? Then, again, this fact may also be deduced directly from the express declaration of the Sacred Writings. 2. The success of the prayers of the saints shall be manifest. “The angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake”—physical signs and convulsions pronouncing “Amen” to the one delightful truth. (*J. Parsons.*) *Christ’s work of intercession in heaven*.—I. IT IS A WORK FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF WHICH HE IS DIVINELY COMMISSIONED. “Another angel,” it is said, “came and stood at the altar.” Who this angel was we are not indeed expressly told. However, the work in which the angel who came and stood by the altar engaged, was proper only to one person—to Him who is the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. He is another angel, not only distinct from the seven before mentioned who stood before God, but different from them in kind, having obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than they; yet He participates in their name, too, as being like them a commissioned minister of Jehovah. He glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest, but was called of God, as was Aaron. Of Him, as well as of the Spirit, it may be said that He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God. His mediation in all its parts is the discharge of a trust committed to Him by that very Being against whom we had rebelled. II. IT IS A WORK FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF WHICH HE IS AMPLY FURNISHED, HAVING THE GOLDEN CENSER AND MUCH INCENSE GIVEN HIM TO OFFER. When it is said that there was given to Him much incense, we are not to conceive that the offering was not of that which was His own. In accordance with the symbolical rite to which the vision is accommodated, it might seem to be put into His hands by another. But this act can have reference only to the assignment to Him of His office, or to His being

endowed with all requisite qualifications for its discharge. A body was prepared for Him. The Holy Spirit was given Him not by measure. The incense was thus provided, which He was, as it were, to kindle and make to rise to God in sweet odour by His voluntary humiliation. III. IT IS A WORK WHICH INSURES THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRAYERS THAT ARE OFFERED IN HIS NAME, AND FOR THE BLESSINGS OF HIS SALVATION. The first sincere prayer for mercy and grace which is intrusted to this great High Priest, in the faith that He will bring it with acceptance before the throne, makes the distinction between the sinner who has no part in Him, and the man who, by giving himself to Christ, has been numbered with His saints. He doubtless intercedes for many who yet know not His name, nor have trusted in His grace; and it is owing to His interposition on their behalf that they are not cut off in their sins, but in His time brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to the faith of God's elect. There is also, we may admit, a direct intercession of Christ for His people, asking for them blessings besides or beyond what they are led to ask for themselves. We often know not what we ought to pray for, what would be really good for us; but He knows what things we have need of; and whatever is necessary to their complete restoration to holiness and happiness, will be included in His requests for those who have an interest in His mediation. But we may learn from the representation here given, that that mediation is not to be conducted in such a way as to dispense with their own prayers. IV. THIS WORK HE CARRIES ON IN BEHALF OF ALL HIS SAINTS. No prayer that rises from earth reaches the throne of grace but that which He presents. But none that is offered in His name is forgotten or omitted in the ministrations of this great High Priest. His understanding is infinite. There is room in His heart for all that will come to seek refuge there; among the unnumbered millions that may look to Him for pity and help, and commit their cause to Him, there is not one for whom He will not interest Himself as much as if his case alone engaged His sympathy. (*J. Henderson, D.D.*) *Practical lessons drawn from the doctrine of Christ's intercession*:—I. IT SHOULD IMPRESS US WITH A DEEP SENSE OF THE EVIL OF SIN. That there is involved in every act of it such daring presumption, and base ingratitude, and brutish folly, and foul malignity, as could not, but for the much incense offered with them by the exalted High Priest, have been otherwise than as a smoke in his nostrils, a fire burning all the day, rendering our prayers and services offensive to Him who sitteth on the throne, provoking the eyes of His glory. II. IT AFFORDS US THE RICHEST ENCOURAGEMENT IN PRAYER. Are you only willing to come to God by Christ, to owe all the blessings you need to His mediation with Him whom you had offended? He is ready to intercede for you, and we know that "Him the Father heareth always." Often has the voice of human eloquence been roused in behalf of the wretched in vain. It has pleaded the woes and wrongs of the oppressed, to hearts so hardened in selfishness and cruel in hate as to be callous to the most pathetic appeals; but the pleadings of this great Advocate are never unsuccessful. The justice and the mercy of God unite in conceding all that He asks. III. IT SHOWS US HOW VAIN AND SUPERSTITIOUS IT IS TO TRUST IN DEPARTED SAINTS OR IN ANGELS TO INTERCEDE FOR US. Whatever may be our speculations or conjectures as to the acquaintance, which saints in glory, or our departed friends in particular, may have with things done on earth, or the interest they may yet take in our affairs; however fondly we may dream at times that they may be employed, as we are told angels are, in some ministrations in behalf of those whom they have left in this vale of tears, let us feel assured that we need no other advocate with the Father in His holy place on high than Jesus Christ the righteous. Upon Him alone let us depend, to Him directly let us go, and say, in opposition to those who would point us to other intercessors, "To whom else should we go?—He hath the words of eternal life." IV. THE FAITH OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO RENDER US DECIDED AND UNDAUNTED IN CONFESSING HIS NAME, AND IN DOING THE WORK TO WHICH HE CALLS. Surely you have nothing to apprehend of ultimate loss or injury in the service of this exalted Redeemer! For though you should have to suffer a while for His name's sake, or after His example, it is that when His glory shall be revealed, ye also may be glad with exceeding joy. And while you have committed to Him the keeping of your souls, you need not fear for aught that may be coming on the earth. He will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world. Does He not pray for this, not that you should be taken out of the world ere you have fulfilled the course allotted for you, but that you should be kept from the evil, that your faith may not fail, that you may be sanctified through the truth revealed in God's Word, and so

fitted to dwell with Him at last in the mansions He hath gone to prepare for you in His Father's house. You need not in any case tremble for the interests of His Church; amid the agitations which seem to threaten the overthrow of all human institutions, and the convulsions which shake and affright the nations, these are secure under the protection of her exalted Head. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's incense perfuming the prayers of all saints*:—I. ALL THE SAINTS ARE DEVOUT AND PRAYING PERSONS. This is plainly intimated in the text, where we read of the prayers of all saints. It is an essential part of their character as saints to be so. It is a branch of their daily business to pray to God. The history of the saints shows this. Ever since God hath had a people in the world they have been described as men that "called upon the name of the Lord"; as "the generation of them that seek Him." It is said that "every one that is godly seeketh the Lord." The lives of good men in later ages show this. They all practised devotion and recommended it to others. The saints esteem it highly reasonable in itself, that as dependent creatures they should own their dependence upon God; that, as needy creatures, they should seek a supply of their wants from Him; that as sinful creatures they should implore His mercy; and as weak creatures should beg grace to help in time of need. II. THERE ARE MANY IMPERFECTIONS ATTENDING THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS. This is implied in the text, where we read of "much incense" being offered with them. It is supposed they were sincere; else they could not be the prayers of saints, nor would incense have been added to them. But the addition of the incense plainly intimates that they were imperfect and polluted, and of themselves unfit to be received by a pure and holy God. III. IT IS THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST WHICH RENDERS THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. These Christians prayed themselves, and Christ, having the golden censer full of incense, intimates that He prayed likewise, offering His own prayers with theirs and for them. He seconds and enforces their petitions. He intercedes that those sinful defects which cleave to their prayers may be pardoned and excused, and their imperfect services accepted of God. These prayers of Christ are enforced by a just, proper, and effectual plea; even His own merit, His perfect righteousness and obedience, even unto death, which are so pleasing to God, that, on that account, He grants mercy to men. His intercession is founded on what He hath done and suffered; so that He hath a just claim to be heard, asking nothing but what He hath already purchased for His people, and God, by His promise and covenant, stands engaged to bestow. Now to this intercession of Christ it is owing that the prayers of the saints are acceptable to God. Application: 1. They who do not make a serious business of prayer are not saints. 2. The intercession of Christ will not excuse the neglect of prayer, or the allowed defects of it. 3. How glorious and how amiable doth Christ appear as an intercessor! 4. What deep humility becometh the greatest saints. 5. Let us fix our dependence on the intercession of Christ for the acceptance of our prayers. (*Job Orton, D.D.*) *Fire of the altar. Fire from the altar*:—Fire is the great consumer. It always bespeaks wrath, torture, and destruction to the wicked. It is the common figure of Divine terribleness toward the guilty—one of the great agents in the administrations of the great day. And when the sublime Priest-Angel of heaven turns His fire-filled censer on the earth, we have come to the day that shall burn as an oven, in the which all the proud and ungodly shall be as stubble to the devouring flames (*Mal. iv. 1*). This fire is taken from the altar. It is one of the fearful characteristics of God's gracious operations, that they heighten the damnation of the disobedient and the unbelieving. It is not Adam's guilt, for there is full remedy in Christ against that. It is not the condemnation in which the gospel finds them, for it comes with a full and everlasting reprieve. But here is the mischief—that when the great and costly salvation of God is carried to them they despise it and make light of it, and go their way as if it were nonsense or nothing. Out of the very altar of sacrifice, therefore, comes their damnation. It is the saving word refused, which is a savor of death unto death in them that perish. Perdition is simply abused or perverted grace. It is the same censer, filled with the same ingredients, only turned downward in the case of those who believe not. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. *And the third part of the trees was burnt up.—Restricted judgment*:—In wrath the Lord ever remembers mercy. In the sounding of four of the seven angels this idea is most prominent. Afflictions of various kinds are seen to rest upon the earth, but they are confined in each case to one-third. It is not a final overthrow, nor is it a vision of destruction. In the disturbance of the

material world is portrayed the upheaving in the spiritual. The judgments are chastisements—a part suffers for the good of the whole. The eye is plucked out to save the whole body. Here a portion—a third part—suffers that the whole perish not. These restricted judgments or chastisements of the Lord have their great use. I. IN AWAKENING THE ATTENTION OF MEN TO THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION. Truly a voice as of a trumpet. II. IN STIMULATING TO REPENTANCE. III. IN THE PREVENTION OF FURTHER SINFULNESS. IV. These chastisements have their final use as disciplinary processes IN ADVANCING RIGHTEOUSNESS. That which applies to the individual life applies also to the life of tribes and nations of men.* To these the present passage relates. Judgments on “the third part” are designed to be corrective and admonitory to the whole. (R. Green.)

Vers. 10, 11. There fell a great star from heaven.—*Apostasy*:—1. By the fall of this star from heaven, we see that apostasy from the truth in pastors is a Luciferian sin, and they thereby are like unto him. 2. Where saving grace is not, all other gifts and endowments soever will never avail to preserve from apostasy, and make one to persevere. 3. As there are no personal gifts, so there is no place or succession that is personal only thereto, that can privilege from apostasy; for here we see a star for light, and in heaven for place, yet to fall from heaven. 4. We see it is not small stars, but a great star that falleth from heaven; whereby we see whom Satan most assaulteth, viz., those that are in primest places and of most excellent gifts. 5. From shining as a heavenly star, by apostasy, we see this star turns to be only as a burning earthly lamp: whereby we are taught what a change sin and apostasy makes from the better to the worse, as in this star from heaven to earth, from standing to falling, and from shining to burning only; by fiery ambition and bitter contention like wormwood, hating most of any the professors of that truth which formerly they held. (Wm. Guild, D.D.) *Brilliant bitterness*:—Commentators say that the star Wormwood of my text was a type of Attila, king of the Huns. He was so called because he was brilliant as a star, and, like wormwood, he embittered everything he touched. A more extraordinary character history does not furnish than this man, Attila, the king of the Huns. The story goes that one day a wounded heifer came limping along through the fields, and a herdsman followed its bloody track on the grass to see where the heifer was wounded, and went on back, further and further, until he came to a sword fast in the earth, the point downward as though it had dropped from the heavens, and against the edges of this sword the heifer had been cut. The herdsman pulled up that sword and presented it to Attila. Attila said that sword must have dropped from the heavens from the grasp of the god Mars, and its being given to him meant that Attila should conquer and govern the whole earth. Other mighty men have been delighted at being called liberators, or the Merciful, or the Good, but Attila called himself, and demanded that others call him, “The Scourge of God.” The Roman Empire conquered the world, but Attila conquered the Roman Empire. He was right in calling himself a scourge, but instead of being “the Scourge of God,” he was the scourge of hell. Because of his brilliancy and bitterness, the commentators might well have supposed him to be the star Wormwood of the text. Have you ever thought how many embittered lives there are all about us, misanthropic, morbid, acrid, saturnine? The European plant from which wormwood is extracted, *Artemisia absinthium*, is a perennial plant, and all the year round it is ready to exude its oil. And in many human lives there is a perennial distillation of acrid experiences. Yea, there are some whose whole work is to shed a baleful influence on others. There are Attilas of the home, Attilas of the social circle, Attilas of the Church, Attilas of the State, and one-third of the waters of all the world, if not two-thirds of the waters, are poisoned by the falling of the star Wormwood. It is not complimentary to human nature that most men, as soon as they get great power, become overbearing. The more power men have the better, if their power be used for good. The less power men have the better, if they use it evil. Some of you are morning stars, and you are making the dawning life of your children bright with gracious influences, and you are beaming upon all the opening enterprises of philanthropic and Christian endeavour, and you are heralds of day. Keep on shining with encouragement and Christian hope! Some of you are evening stars, and you are cheering the last days of old people. But are any of you the star Wormwood? Do you scold and growl from the thrones paternal or maternal? Are your children everlastingly pecked at? What is your influence upon the neighbourhood, the town, or the city of your residence? I will suppose that

you are a star of wit. What kind of rays do you shoot forth? Do you use that splendid faculty to irradiate the world or to rankle it? Are your powers of mimicry used to put religion in contempt? Is it a bunch of nettlesome invective? Is it fun at others' misfortune? Then you are the star Wormwood. Yours is the fun of a rattlesnake trying how well it can sting. But I will change this, and suppose you are a star of worldly prosperity. Then you have large opportunity. You can encourage that artist by buying his picture. You can improve the fields, the stables, the highway by introducing higher style of fowl and horse and cow and sheep. You can endow a college. You can build a church. You can put a missionary of Christ on that foreign shore. But suppose you grind the face of the poor. Suppose when a man's wages are due you make him wait for them because he cannot help himself. Suppose by your manner you act as though he were nothing and you were everything. Suppose you are selfish and overbearing and arrogant. You are the star Wormwood, and you have embittered one-third, if not three-thirds, of the waters that roll past your *employés* and operatives and dependents and associates. Are we embittering the domestic or social or political fountains, or are we like Moses, who, when the Israelites in the wilderness complained that the waters of Lake Marah were bitter and they could not drink them, their leader cut off the branch of a certain tree and threw that branch into the water, and it became sweet and slaked the thirst of the suffering host? Are we with a branch of the Tree of Life sweetening all the brackish fountains that we can touch? What is true of individuals is true of nations. God sets them up to revolve as stars, but they may fall wormwood. Witness Thebes, Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, and Imperial Rome. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) An angel . . . saying Woe . . . to the inhabitants of the earth.—*The body and the bird*:—"And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, . . . Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth!" The true reading of the text is given in the Revised Version. It was not "an angel flying," but a solitary eagle or vulture, that St. John saw. Hovering high overhead, a mere speck in the sky, and its harsh cry sounding as if it uttered over and over again the ominous words, "Woe, woe, woe!"

I. THIS EAGLE HAS OFTEN BEEN SEEN. It has long hovered over and at last descended upon: 1. Corrupt communities. 2. Corrupt men. Many imagine that the great laws of God will be, no doubt, fulfilled amid nations and Churches and other bodies of men, but they will not take note of individuals. II. IT IS GOOD THAT IT SHOULD BE SEEN. In the physical world, if there were no scavengers, no agents whereby what is corrupt and corrupting could be rendered harmless, life could not go on. III. MEN SOMETIMES THINK THEY SEE IT WHEN THEY DO NOT. Poor Job—his friends, his comforters, would have it that his dreadful sufferings were judgments of God upon him. IV. MEN OFTEN FAIL TO SEE IT WHEN THEY MIGHT AND SHOULD. 1. The bird may be invisible. It may be so far up in the sky, so far away, that our limited eyesight cannot travel so far, it is out of our range. 2. It may be restrained. God is "long-suffering, not willing that any should perish." 3. It may have already descended, and be doing its work, and you not know it. 4. If it come not now, it will fasten on him the moment he reaches the next world's shore. Ah, yes! if a man have made his soul carrion-like, the eagle of judgment will find him sooner or later in trouble; from without or within, here or yonder—there is no escape. Remember, then: (1) They are fools who make a mock at sin. (2) Turn from it, and pray for the heart to love and dread the Lord, and to diligently live after His commandments. (*S. Conway, B.A.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1-12. I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth.—*Moral evil in the universe*:—I. IT IS EXPOSABLE (ver. 1). Moral evil, in its incipient state, so stupefies the faculties and blinds the conscience that the subject only becomes aware of it by the advent of a messenger from heaven—an angel from heaven uncovers it, makes it bare to the soul. II. IT IS FATHOMLESS. "Bottomless pit." Who can fathom its—1. Origin. 2. Issues. III. IT IS BURNING. "A great furnace." Like all fire, it exists in two states—latent or active. Where it becomes active it is consuming and transmuting: it consumes the good, and transmutes its embers into

evil, and in all it inflicts agony on the soul—the agony of moral regrets for the past, and terrible forebodings for the future. IV. IT IS OBSCURING. 1. How benighted men are on the eternal question of right! 2. How blinded men are to the eternal conditions of well-being! V. IT IS ALARMING (ver. 3). What hellish squadrons, to terrify and destroy the soul, issue from the fathomless abysses of moral evil! Terrible armies come in the memories of the past and in the apprehensions of the mysterious future. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The fallen stars*:—A star falling from heaven may be interpreted as something bright that leaps from its proper place, or may be used as the symbol of many things that are out of their true position, and as the type of many persons who are wandering, or who have wandered, or who will wander from their proper locality. It stands for broken plans, broken character, for virtue turned upside down, and for a world filled with riot, confusion, and shame. 1. As we study history, we find, in each age, a large number of prominent men who for a long season gave a brilliant light, and then all at once became eclipsed by their sins, being struck from the celestial skies. Is there any sight more sad than this? It is opportunity clipped, virtue smothered, consummate grandeur scorched, and a posterity robbed of examples that might have been splendidly luminous beyond all human estimate. Such men have struck a blow at humanity, and they stand unenvied, in the niche of fame, as traitors to their race, aliens from God, and bad specimens of a discrowned morality; and such is the penalty of a high position misused, of a great trust betrayed, and of a grand possibility disgraced. 2. Again, great cities and countries that have become extinct are fallen stars—Babylon, Nineveh, and Tyre, and others of like nature, which once led the world in beauty, culture, commerce, and force, but which now are lost in the ashes that serve as their mausoleum. No one could have foreseen their fate, because so stately, so magnificent, and so glorious did they appear, and right royal in their beauty. 3. In each one's personal history we discover that bright luminaries have fallen from their place; for no one can look back upon a past life without detecting various periods when awful slips were made. How innocent we once were! What bright dreams of goodness flitted athwart the brain, crowned the soul, and illuminated a possible future! Ah! "the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak." We meant to do that which was right, but temptation came, then we turned aside to the evil way; and probably there is not a person in the world at the age of twenty-one who has not lost somewhat of the freshness of early life, and we all moan over some good thing that we have too easily let go. Are we as truthful as we once were? as honest? as pure? Ah! the firmament of our souls has become strangely darkened, and many of the brilliant lights that once studded it appear to have died out. Only here and there twinkles one little star, very lonely, sad, obscure. Clouds and darkness are round about us, while a thick vapour has thrown its fearful shroud over our original beauty. Yet, all this we can remedy; and these choice constellations of early days, now so disguised, can be made to shine with renewed glory, can once more proclaim their power, and can yet again blaze with gorgeous splendour. And Jesus came on purpose to tell us how to keep these starlike virtues in their orbit, how to call them back when they have wandered, and how to summon up their original splendour. He did not wish us to be freed from all temptation, that, merely by the absence of exposure, our innocence might be eternally fortified, and that our goodness might be iron-clad—no, not that; but He endeavoured to show us how to meet temptation, how to conquer it, how to take our innocence and to push it into virtue, and how to change a mere passive goodness into a decided, active, and glorious nobleness of character. (*Caleb D. Bradlee.*) *Why should God permit this star to fall?*—Could not He who made the heavens have kept the constellations in their place, and have saved from extinction those brilliant lights? If He could only make them, but could never control them after they were born, where was His omnipotence? If He could only make them, and yet not know that they would rebel, where was His omniscience? Or, in other words, why did God ever allow sin to attack the children of men?—that old question that is ever new, and that will ever come up to trouble us; for it has puzzled the human heart ever since the human heart was made, yet is not the answer really very plain? Without free will we should be machines; but with it there must be the possibility of our going astray. God can, and does, prevent sin from injuring the world ultimately; but He cannot, consistently with the freedom of the human mind, stop a human being from going astray if that human being so desires. And if the star will fall from heaven, why it must fall; but God will prevent it from scorching the world, while God, perhaps, in time will so inflame it

with His blessed love, pity, and grace that it will find again its place, regain its power, and shine once more in splendour. (*Ibid.*) *The evil effects of degeneracy: the fallen star*:—The evil effects are—I. WIDESPREAD. II. DESTRUCTIVELY INJURIOUS. III. BITTERLY AFFLICTIVE. 1. To him who falls. 2. To them whom he drags down with him. 3. To them whose sympathies being only with goodness are afflicted by anything that tends to degeneracy of manners, to feebleness of faith, or to the lowering of the tone and felicity of human life. 4. To the widespread, outlying multitudes, amongst whom the spread of goodness is retarded by any act of unfaithfulness and any instance of defection. (*R. Green.*) *Abuse of the best things*:—The best things, when abused, become the worst; there is no devil like a fallen angel, no enemy to the gospel like an apostate Christian, no hate like the “theological hate,” no war like a religious war, and no corruption like religious corruption. The reasons are not far to seek. The best things are the strongest; they can therefore do evil when used in an evil way. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Shall men seek death, and shall not find it*.—*The extremity of anguish*:—I. A state of misery in which DEATH IS SOUGHT. 1. Death is universally regarded amongst men as the greatest evil. The ravenous beast, the furious storm, the destructive pestilence, the engulfing earthquake, are only terrible because death is terrible. 2. The relief which men generally seek in this world in their sufferings is from death. The mariner will forsake his ship with valuable cargo, the king will resign his kingdom, the wounded will suffer amputation of every limb, if thought needful, to avoid death. II. A state of misery in which DEATH IS SOUGHT AS A RELIEF IN VAIN. It is miserable to seek relief in the most deeply felt evil, but to seek it in such an evil in vain adds wondrously to the misery of the case. Fatigue, disappointment, the consciousness of lost energy, add to the anguish. Earth runs from death; hell runs after it, and runs in vain. III. CONCLUDING INFERENCES: 1. The fact that men are exposed to such a state of being implies that some sad catastrophe has befallen our nature. 2. There is something in the universe to be dreaded by man more than death, and this is sin. 3. Christianity should be hailed as the only means to deliver us from this extremity of anguish. It destroys sin; it “condemns sin in the flesh.” (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *As it were crowns like gold*.—*The fictions of sin*:—These mystical locusts personify the lusts and passions which destroy the soul, and which, destroying the soul, destroy all things. Our text suggests that sin affects great things, it promises great things, and it never gives what it promises. “On their heads were as it were crowns of gold.” It is not a real, solid, golden crown, but “as it were.” Sin always acts by an infernal magic; it is full of illusion, imposition, and mockery. There is indeed a Mephistophelean element in all sin; it saves its word whilst it lies, it gives a spurious gift, it is ironical, scornful, and derisive. It is the supreme sophistry; the supreme satire. I. There is no reality in the GREATNESS that sin promises. Sin promises distinction, glory, fame. The devil is quite flush of crowns. But men always find at last that selfish greatness, soiled greatness, unrighteous greatness is false greatness, and that it only mocks those who have made such immense sacrifices on its behalf. Take a conqueror, of whom Napoleon is the type. He was himself a locust, with a crown upon his head. And just as the locusts strip the trees and leave rich and smiling landscapes desolate, so did this imperial locust and his legions strip kingdoms and leave a track of blood and ruin. But how empty was all his glory, and how little it came to! An exile at St. Helena, you feel he got the crown, “as it were.” And to-day how utterly discredited he is, and how beggared all his greatness! The world knows him as a colossal brigand. Take a poet, and let Byron be our typical instance. How much of greatness and fame did he seem to acquire, and yet his career was based on egotism, sensuality, godlessness; and how poor he looks now! Take a politician. I have been reading the biography of a notorious statesman. He was a brilliant man and he loved brilliance. All his letters are about splendid events, gorgeous pageantries, eloquent speeches. He breakfasts with wits, takes tea with duchesses, dines with the queen. You read about literature, diplomacy, rank, but the great words of righteousness and humanitarianism are hardly breathed. How poor it all looks now! How theatrical it looks, how theatrical it was! How differently we look upon Wilberforce, who brought men liberty; upon Cobden, who gave us bread; upon Shaftesbury, who made mercy to distil upon waste places as the gentle rains drop upon the plains beneath. Their crowns are solid, they glow as they age; but as for my dramatic statesman, his diadem was dust before he was. It is always so. Wherever glory is built on egotism, violence, unrighteousness, it possesses only an apparitional crown. “The burglar

seizes property, but in his hands it is no longer property, but pillage." The sensual man seizes love, but beautiful love thus seized instantly dies and becomes a ghastly corpse—that we call lust. The ambitious man seizes greatness, but the moment that he touches it in the spirit of egotism and pride the splendid crown becomes tinsel. "The coveted thing, whatever it be, loses its essence when the lawless lust has got it." If you want greatness and glory seek for it in another and truer pathway. You young men, be sure that you seek it in the ways of truth and wisdom and purity. "Wisdom is the principal thing." "She shall bring thee to honour." You professional men. You justly contemplate promotion and distinction in your calling, lawyer, physician, artist. Be sure you make no compromise. Be ready to go without a crown that you may get one. You municipal men. You political aspirants. Bring the religious and moral into your life or some day you will be mocked by knowing the crown for which you struggled is only a miserable counterfeit. And then we all hope for a larger glory and honour still. It is astonishing what a faith we have in the possibilities of our nature; what an instinct for greatness; what an appetite for glory. Years ago I remember a poor woman dying; she was a very poor woman, and was carried to the grave from a lowly cottage. But her children put this verse on her funeral card: "And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." They felt she was great enough to have the sun for her robe, the moon for a footstool, and Orion, Venus, Sirius, Arcturus, Aldebaran, for the stars of her forehead. And they were right. The most magnificent things of the Apocalypse do not startle us. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." But let us aim at true greatness—not mock greatness. We do not want the crowns of the locusts—we want one of those other crowns, such as the elders wore, as the angels wore, as the saints wore. The true crown is a crown of righteousness, it fadeth not away. II. There is no reality in the **WEALTH** that sin promises. Wealth without morality, without humanity, without spirituality, is in an extraordinary degree unreal and tantalising. On the Stock Exchange is what is known as "phantom gold." Certain transactions in gold are known by this name. It is gold that exists only on paper, and it is dealt in as a pure speculation. But how much of the wealth of society is "phantom gold"! It is on paper only; it is truly a visionary, speculative thing. There is no real solid joy in it. Look at illegitimate wealth—wealth gotten by immoral means. Men sometimes get it, and then they are detected and they are deprived of it. There are rogues in prison to-day who have been deprived of their ill-gotten wealth. You have seen a mouse in a trap—it gets the cheese "as it were." And if they do not go to prison, wealth that comes badly has a trick of melting away swiftly. They put it into a bag with holes, they get it and are poor, they never have anything. Fairy gold turns to withered leaves and dust. And sometimes conscience will not let them enjoy it. Look at Judas! He got the thirty pieces of silver "as it were." And there is much the same deception and disappointment with all selfish, godless, unspiritual wealth. Men have it, and yet they have it not, they get the golden prize, and then handling it find it "as it were." They have it, and it is a phantom. It is like a man promising you money, and then showing you a five-pound note in a looking-glass. Balzac, the French writer, built himself a splendid mansion, but when he had finished it he had exhausted his resources, and so he proceeded to furnish it in imagination. Here a ticket announced a great picture, there a cabinet, couch, table, &c. The realities were not there, only labels. And it is often much the same with the selfish unspiritual rich, their outward life overbrims with riches, but their soul is empty. They have certificates, title-deeds, parchments declaring that they have wealth and power and happiness, but the realities are utterly wanting in their deepest, truest life. They can't translate it into the true riches of brain and heart, of character, experience, and hope. A friend of mine in London is a jeweller for the theatres, and he was showing me the other day the jewels of the stage. What a size those jewels are! Mammoth gems, mountains of light, stars of the first magnitude. What colours those jewels have! Rich, burning, gorgeous hues. And what a quantity! Pearls by the peck. Diamonds, rubies, emeralds, abound. Crowns, mitres, diadems, necklaces on every side. The crown-jewels in the Tower look mean and shabby compared with this treasury of gems. And yet one crown jewel would far more than have bought them all. Clever, ingenious, plausible—they were still Brummagem. One simple, small, modest gem of royalty outweighs all the gay and garish gems of the mimic kings and queens of the gaslight. And it is much the same with Vanity Fair, with all unspiritual glory, and fashion, and luxury. The rich and gay are but actors, their

purple brings them no self-respect, their gold no gladness, their splendour no satisfaction of soul. Have no unrighteous wealth. It will only deceive and curse you. Do not hold your wealth in the spirit of selfishness. Be the steward of God, using for His glory, for high and generous purposes, whatever He gives you. And be sure of this, that no wealth is truly yours until it is realised in the spiritual and godly. "The gold of this land is good." III. There is no reality in the PLEASURE that sin promises. Pleasure that is not moral; pleasure that is selfish; pleasure that has no thought of God in it is always fictitious. It is imagination, illusion, falsehood. I remember a picture of the Prodigal Son, and there was one fine touch in it. The poor fellow had come to the feeding of the swine, and the painter had put in one of those poetic touches which mean so much—a few poppies gave bits of colour to the dismal picture. Yes, one deep lesson of the parable was there—the prodigal had been under the power of opium, he had been the victim of illusion. And this illusion had betrayed him to the far country, the swine, the hunger, the brink of despair. It is always thus—the poppy plays the grand part. The devil makes men to see wondrous delights in sensual, selfish, godless pleasures. But they prove sooner or later as the prodigal son did that it is illusion, that unrighteous and unspiritual enjoyment is a miserable cheat. The African saw blocks of silver on the other side of the river, but when he crossed the river they turned into black stones. He never gives you a crown of roses but "as it were." Brethren, seek for a real crown—greatness, wealth, pleasure. Make for this. Don't be deceived. And there is One who can give it. It is in the truth and grace and power of Christ that you shall realise all the grand and beautiful and enduring satisfactions of the heart. There is no "as it were" in Jesus Christ. It is reality; it satisfies, abides. (W. L. Watkinson.)

Stings in their tails.—The tail of a habit:—"A beast escaped with a halter," says Thomas Manton, "is easily caught again; so a lust indulged will bring us into our old bondage." Nothing is harder to bury than the tail of a habit; but unless we do bury it, tail and all, the viper will wriggle out of its grave. A clear, clean, and complete escape is the only true deliverance from an evil practice which has long been indulged. A drunkard is not safe from the drink while he takes his occasional glass with a friend. A man who allows himself any one sin will be sure to allow another; where one dog comes into the room another may follow. A fish is not free for his life while a hook is in his mouth, and a line holds him to the rod. However thin the connecting medium, it will be the death of the fish, if it holds; and, however slight the bond which links a man to evil, it will be his sure ruin. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

There come two woes more.—Woes to come:—"To my own apprehension, while reading this in private, it seemed just such an utterance as the angel of God might address to the soul of the ungodly when he leaves the body. "Death is over," saith the angel. "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter." Thou hast passed through the woes of death, but behold there comes a judgment, and then comes a second death: "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter." 1. The woe which is supposed to be passed is the woe of death. Death to the righteous has lost its sting, but to the wicked death has all its terrors. Its horrors are not diminished by anything that Christ hath done; yea, rather, death gathers more cause of dismay; for the very Cross itself may fill the obdurate heart with consternation. When the sinner dies impenitent, having rejected the mercy of Christ, death is woe indeed. One of my predecessors, Mr. Benjamin Keach, has left on record an account of a man that had been a trouble to his Church—for he had backslidden—and his cries, shrieks, and tears, at the very prospect of death, were enough to make one's hair turn white and stand upon end. The poor wretched man seems to have had a foretaste of perdition before he entered into its fire; and so it is oftentimes with the wicked; thou hast had thy harvest; thy summer is ended; but thou art not saved; thou hast been warned, but thou shalt not be warned again, and all the while conscience says this is just—I knew my duty and I did it not; I knew it was my duty to repent, but I steeled my heart against God, and I would not forsake my sins; I turned my back upon the Cross to dance in a merry circle downwards to the pit. This shall make death woeful indeed, when it shall be hurled into the mind; thou knewest thy duty, but thou didst it not. 2. Of the two woes that loom in the future, I would now briefly but solemnly speak. (1) The first woe of the man who dies in his sins is the woe of judgment; that is terrible indeed. Scarce can a prisoner stand in the docks to be tried for his life by his fellow-man without trembling; at least, it is a wonder if it should be so. But conceive the great assize—the graves are opened! What horrors shall seize hold upon the wicked at that moment! (2)

After the woe of judgment there comes the woe of hell. Oh, what a woe is that in which all the woes of the lost are condensed! You cannot compare the pains of this life with the agonies to be endured hereafter. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 13-21. Loose the four angels which are bound.—*The sixth trumpet*:—

I. THE STATE OF SOCIETY AT THE TIME. II. THE NATURE OF THIS VISITATION. 1. It is evoked by a cry out of the four horns of the altar. It comes from the immediate presence of God, and therefore with the sanction of God. The call itself is the common voice of all four of the horns of the altar, indicating the energy and the universality of the demand for vengeance, and of that vengeance itself. The implication is that God's appointed way of forgiveness has been set aside; that the Divine system of gracious atonement and salvation has been rejected, and that the wickedness of earth has risen so high, especially in point of antagonism to the Cross, that even the altar itself, which otherwise cries only for mercy, is forced into a cry for vengeance. 2. The command issues to the angel who sounds this trumpet. The command itself is the command of the condemned Saviour. But it is addressed to the angel. He obeys it as his Divine commission, and thus presides over the administration ushered in by his trumpet. He looses the imprisoned forces, and sets them free for action. 3. Other angels are the more direct executors of the woe. Some have taken these to be good angels. I do not so regard them. Good angels are free, not bound. Good angels would not destroy men, except by special command of God; but these had only to be loosed, and they at once rushed forth for slaughter, impelled to the dreadful business by their own malicious nature. They were bound in mercy to our race, and here they are let loose in judgment. Their number also indicates the universality of their operations. 4. The moment the four bound angels are released from their constraint, hosts of death-dealing cavalry overrun the earth. As there are infernal locusts, so there are infernal horses; and as the former were let forth to overrun the world with their torments under the fifth trumpet, so the latter are let forth to overrun the world with still more terrible inflictions under the sixth. 5. Fearful havoc of human life is made by these infernal horses. To say nothing of the dread and horror which their presence inspires, and the confusion which their advent strikes into every department of society, it is here written, that, by these horses, one out of every three of the whole human family is killed, destroyed from the face of the earth. 6. The continuance of this plague is equally extraordinary. 7. The object of this woe is partly retributive and partly reformatory. It belongs to the judicial administrations of the great day. It is God's terrific judgment upon the world, which has disowned allegiance to Him, and rejected the mediation of His Son. It is the righteous indignation of outraged justice which can no longer endure the superlative wickednesses of men. And yet, in wrath God remembers mercy. He suffers only one-third of the race to fall a prey to this tremendous woe. He delighteth not in the death of the wicked, but would rather that they should turn from their evil ways and live. (J. A. Seiss, D.D.) The rest . . . repented not.—*Impenitence*:—So it was in the beginning, so it will be to the end. All outward plagues, all outbursts of moral evils, all apostasies in Divine societies, were and are trumpets of God; those who acknowledge His goodness and truth will tremble and rejoice that He is speaking to them; that He is calling them to repent; that He is preparing the way for a manifestation of Himself. But these trumpets, let them sound as loud and long as they may, seldom stir a man who disbelieves in a living and good God to confess Him. The terror which is in them stupefies rather than quickens. The slumberer is half roused out of his dream; is bewildered; takes a fresh opiate; flies to the gods that neither see, nor hear, nor walk; flies from Him whom he has only recognised in thunderings and lightnings. The sentence is everlastingly true that not the fire, nor the earthquake, nor the blast rending the mountains, but only the still small voice reaches the heart, and compels it to bow. (F. D. Maurice, M.A.) *Man's stubborn will*:—I. ALL MEN NEED REPENTANCE. II. GOD PLEADS WITH MEN TO BRING THEM TO REPENTANCE. These judgments of which we read are not God's primary dealings with men. He does not begin in this manner. God has pleaded with men by His Spirit in their consciences. By His goodness, giving them all manner of providential mercies. Then, more especially by His Word. III. BUT THESE Milder METHODS OFTEN FAIL. IV. STERNER METHODS ARE THEN TRIED. V. BUT EVEN THESE, AT TIMES, AND FOR LONG TIME, FAIL. This is the declaration of our text (also Jer. v. 3; viii. 6; Rom. ii. 4, 5). So was it with Pharaoh, when the plagues one after another, which in many respects resembled these trumpet-plagues, came upon him. VI. WHAT IS THE REASON

OF THIS? The answer is manifold, as, for example: 1. Those that are spared argue from that fact that they need not repent. 2. Sin deadens belief in God. It makes men practical atheists. 3. God's judgments are put down to secondary causes. 4. "Perfect love casteth out fear." This is true in a sense the apostle never meant. Let the heart love sin, as it is so prone to do, and that love will utterly cast out the fear of God. 5. The law of habit. You may bend the sapling, but not the tree. VII. HOW INTENSELY SERIOUS ARE THE TEACHINGS OF THIS FACT! Is it true that, though God sends judgment after judgment upon men, they will yet not repent? Then: 1. More judgments and worse will come. 2. How we need to watch and pray lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin! 3. What imperative need there is of the power of the Holy Spirit! (*S. Conway, B.A.*)

CHAPTER X.

VERS. 1-7. I saw another mighty angel . . . clothed with a cloud.—*The word of assurance and consolation*:—The Book of Revelation is written for the comfort of the Church in presence of her oppressing foes. This word of consolation is of great preciousness and help to the suffering Church; for—I. IT IS GIVEN BY THE LORD HIMSELF. The strong angel "coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud," can be none other than the Lord Himself. The surrounding symbols are His, and His alone. "The rainbow was upon His head"; "His face was as the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire." It is the reflection of the Divine glory in Christ. When He cries the seven thunders utter their voices, and His great voice was "as a lion roareth." From the word of such a one the Church may always gather the utmost comfort. II. IT GIVES THE PROSPECT AND PLEDGE OF RELEASE. The suffering Church writhes in its anguish; but a definite limit is put to the days of sorrow. "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound." This is not indefinite and uncertain: "There shall be time no longer"—there shall be no more delay. Relief is certain and speedy. This is assured by oath, even by the voice of the Angel who "sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven, and the things that are therein, and the earth, and the things that are therein, and the sea, and the things that are therein." This oath is for truest confirmation. III. The word of consolation and promise is GIVEN IN THE MOST SOLEMN AND ASSURING MANNER. This is seen in the whole vision—the person, attitude, message, oath, and surrounding testimonies. IV. IT IS THE TRUEST, THE UTMOST ENCOURAGEMENT TO HOPE. Upon this vision the Church should ever reflect in the time of suffering and fear. It is possible patiently to endure and hold out when a definite and assured prospect and pledge of relief is given. The words, "declared to His servants the prophets," shall have their fulfilment; "the mystery" shall be "finished." (*R. Green.*) *Aspects of Christ*:—1. The gospel and Church of Christ has mighty enemies, such as princes and the great men of the earth. Yet here is her comfort, that she has a mighty Angel, even that great Angel of the Covenant, Christ Jesus, the Almighty God, for her, to deliver her and confound her enemies, in the height of their pride. 2. By this mighty Angel's coming down from heaven we see whence and whereby shall be the ruin of antichrist, to wit, not from the earth or the arm of flesh, but from heaven and the heavenly power of the Word of God. 3. He comes clothed with a cloud, to show the manner of His manifestation to His Church in His Word and sacraments, and that her knowledge of Him on earth is but obscure and only in part. 4. By the rainbow on His head we see that He comes to His Church with peace, and the assurance of the covenant thereof; and so shall He come in like manner to every humbled soul. 5. His face is said to be as the sun, whereby we see that as antichrist comes with darkness and the smoke of error, so on the contrary Christ comes ever with the light and brightness of truth. 6. His feet as pillars of fire, to tread down and consume His enemies, serve as a just and dreadful terror to His foes, but as a sweet and singular comfort to His elect ones, who are here trod upon and cruelly used. (*William Guild, D.D.*) **And he had in his hands a little book open.**—*The little book; or, characteristics of revelation.* "He had in his hand a little book open." I. THE AMBASSADOR WHO BRINGS IT. Much may be learnt concerning any message that is sent by an earthly monarch from the character and rank and insignia which

belong to the messenger. He who brings God's message to mankind is one of no mean order, and the tokens of his authority are of the most impressive kind. 1. He comes from heaven. The Bible is not a merely human production. 2. It is mighty in its power. It was "a strong angel" that St. John saw, suggesting to him and to us the strength of that message which he was commissioned to bring. What trophies of its power has not the Bible won? 3. Its truths fill the soul with awe. The angel was "clothed with a cloud"—symbol this of the majesty and mystery that surround and invest the foundation-teachings of the Word of God. 4. But they are crowned with blessed promise and grace. "The rainbow was upon his head." Though there be so much that we cannot penetrate or comprehend, nevertheless the predominant characteristic is that of "grace." 5. They irradiate and illumine all our earthly life. "His face was it were the sun." "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun" (Eccles. xi. 7). 6. And they shall never be driven forth or removed. "His feet as pillars of fire," and ver. 2. "He planted his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth." His invincible power is signified by "the pillars of fire"; and his having set his feet upon the earth and sea tells of "the immovable steadfastness of the heavenly Conqueror against all the resistance of His enemies." All Church history proves this. In many ages and places it has been death to keep a copy of the sacred writings. Wherever they were found, they were ruthlessly destroyed, and often they also with whom they were found. But every copy of the Bible that we possess to-day proves how partial and ineffective all such endeavours were. Glory be to God that they were so! II. THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN OF IT. "A little book open." 1. A book. The Bible is not the revelation itself, but the record of it. But without the record the revelation would not have availed us. Great scorn has been poured on the idea of "a book revelation," and an immense deal of poor wit has been expended upon the idea that God should have used such mean materials as books are made of as the vehicle of His revelation of Himself. But the Bible is not the revelation, only its record; and it is reason for eternal gratitude that His revelation has been so given that it can be thus recorded. In what other way could the knowledge of God have been so well preserved or spread abroad? 2. Its seeming insignificance. It is "a little book." In these days of gold and guns, when wealth and armies are thought to be the great means of accomplishing everything, the spiritual force that lies hidden in "a little book" counts but for little. But what hath not God wrought by it? And we may be grateful that it is little, and not a ponderous library which it would need a lifetime even to know part of, but one small volume which can be read and re-read and carried everywhere as we will. No doubt the littleness of the book here spoken of is intended to be in contrast with that vast volume told of in chap. v., which was written within and without, so complete, so full, was it. 3. It is to be an open book. St. John saw it "open" in the hand of the angel. There have been and there are those who would have the Word of God closed, if not entirely, yet to large extent. God hath caused the vision to be written and made "plain," so that the unlearned may learn, and the most simple comprehend. III. THE VOICES FOR AND AGAINST IT. We read that the angel cried with a loud voice, and that the seven thunders uttered their voices. Now—1. The angelic voice suggests—(1) The startling effect of the Word of God upon mankind. The angel's voice was "as when a lion roareth." So did the Word of God affect men. See when at the Reformation it was first freely given to Europe. How it roused men's minds, awoke them from their lethargy, nation after nation heard the sound and broke away from the superstition and sins in which they had so long lived! And it is so still. (2) The assured persuasion it gives concerning the mystery of this present life. The solemn oath of the angel (vers. 5-7) did but represent what the Word of God accomplishes. As He gave, so it gives, solemn assurance that what now is—so much of it so mournful, so full of mystery—is not ever to be, but shall have an end. Life is a mystery now, even in these comparatively calm days of ours; but what must it have appeared to the persecuted, outraged Church of St. John's day? 2. The thunder voice (ver. 4). The question comes—Whence this voice of the seven thunders? It has, we think, been too hastily assumed that St. John is referring to the sevenfold voice of the thunder mentioned in Psa. xxix. And, doubtless, in this book thunders are referred to as coming forth from the throne of God (cf. chap. iv. 5). But the true interpretation is given, we think, in the strikingly parallel passages in Dan. viii. 26 and xii. 4-9, where that which the prophet is commanded to "seal up" is not what God shall do, but what His people's enemies shall do against Him and them. And so here, we

believe, the thunders tell of the wrathful response, the angry mutterings of God's enemies against His truth. And, thus regarded, they tell of the opposition the Word arouses in the world of the wicked. It has ever been so. Hence the Divine forces on the side of the Church and against her foes are what this book mainly reveals. It tells us, "The Lord is on our side; we will not fear what man can do unto us." IV. THE DIRECTIONS CONCERNING IT. As it was with the "little book" so it must be with the Word of God. 1. It must be received as from God (ver. 8). 2. It must be taken into the soul. This is the meaning of the strange command, "Take it, and eat it up." 3. When so taken, it will produce both sorrow and joy. The first taste will be pleasant. "In thy mouth sweet as honey." And it is so. Is it not a joy that we have a revelation from God at all; that we are assured God is "our Father which art in heaven"; that our salvation is "without money and without price," for that Christ died for us? Yes; "sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb" are these precious truths. But the after-taste will cause distress and pain. Witness the Saviour's tears over lost souls, and the like tears shed still by those who know "the fellowship of His sufferings." That men should resist and reject such a Saviour; that we should so long have done so, and do not yet wholly receive Him—yes, this after-taste hath pain. 4. When eaten, it qualifies for witness-bearing for God (ver. 11). This is the real qualification, this deep experimental knowledge of the power of God's Word. All else is a naught compared with this. Only such God ordains to be His prophets. Thus doth this "little book," though it meant not the Bible, tell of the Bible. (S. Conway, B.A.)

Vers. 5-7.—That there should be time no longer.—*The end of time*:—"That there should be time no longer." A tremendous asseveration, whether we regard the thing affirmed or the person who affirms it. Of the person making this asseveration we may say that there are traces about him, which, although he is called an angel, seem to identify him with our Lord Jesus Christ. In the first verse he is represented as clothed with a cloud; and the cloud vesture is stated in the Psalms to be the vesture of God Himself—"clouds and darkness are round about Him." A rainbow encircles his head; and a rainbow is the well-known token of the covenant of grace made with us in and through Christ. "His face," we are told, "was as the sun." In the first chapter of this Book, John describes the countenance of the Son of Man to be "as the sun shining in its strength"; not to mention that one of the features of the glorified Christ, as He appeared at the Transfiguration, was this, "His face did shine as the sun." I. WHAT MAY BE MEANT BY THIS CESSATION OF TIME? Time, considered in itself, can never cease to exist. It must flow on and on to endless ages. Everything which happens must, of course, have a certain period of time, longer or shorter, in which to happen. The redeemed in glory will sing the praises of God and the Lamb. Time must elapse while they are singing those praises. If in the glorified body there should be a heart, it must go on, pulsation after pulsation, in never-ending succession. If in the new heavens and the new earth there should be anything analogous to that movement of the heavenly bodies which gives us day and night and the vicissitudes of the seasons, such a movement must necessarily ask time to proceed in—nay, as it proceeds, it must measure time. What, then, is meant by the announcement of a period when there shall be time no longer? Time, as I have said, must always flow on; but it may be annihilated to us, or in great measure annihilated. How this may be is not really an intricate or a subtle question, although it may at first sight appear so. It is generally and truly said that to Almighty God there is no such thing as time. If you understand this assertion, you will then find no difficulty in perceiving how time to us may be no longer. To say that to Almighty God there is no such thing as time, is only another method of expressing the truth (and be it said with the utmost reverence), that God has a perfect memory and a perfect foresight. There are many points of analogy between the mind and the eye. Imagine, then, an eye as free from the laws of the eye as you have been imagining a mind free from the laws of the mind. Imagine an eye not subjected to the laws of perspective, an eye to which things do not, as they recede from it, either diminish in size or fade in colour. It must be clear that to such an eye distance does not exist, just as to a mind endowed with perfect memory and perfect foresight time does not exist. One object may be placed a yard distant from the eye; another object may be placed a thousand miles distant; but if the latter of these objects appear of the same size, shape, and colour, and with all the same circumstantialities, as it would if brought within the range of thirty-six inches to that eye distance is annihilated, and has no existence. And if God were

to announce to any one that distance would be no more to him, this would be only another form of saying that his eyesight should be free from those limitations which are at present the conditions under which eyesight exists. Thus we have arrived at the last stage of our explanation. You have only to remember that the human mind, in another stage of existence, will be made competent for a far higher state of things than it can ever now attain, that its reach will be increased both as regards the past and the future, in order to comprehend the announcement that "time shall be no longer." Our memory of all that has befallen us will then be perfect. Many events and sensations of our past career are buried away in the sod of the mind, trodden down into the soil, and overlaid by our more recent experiences. Of many very critical events, on our minds there is just a headstone, as it were, with a monumental inscription, giving in the coldest manner their name and date; but freshness, reality, and vitality they have none. Yet, even now, passages of our past history are, ever and anon, recalled to us with a wonderful vividness, by music, by odours, by long forgotten scenes, or by some other association of the senses. Sudden and transient flashings these, of a light which is destined one day to flush the whole mind, and to penetrate into its darkest recesses. The memory has really no more lost its deposits than the graveyard has lost the corpses entrusted to its keeping. Those deposits will one day start from the sod in all the freshness of new life, and stand up upon their feet "an exceeding great army." Nor need we shrink from supposing that in that higher condition of existence the powers of memory and foresight possessed by the mind will be greatly enlarged, whether or not they be made, as regards our future experience, perfect.

II. WHY THE ASSEVERATION OF THE TEXT IS MADE UPON OATH. The reasons are obvious. First, its being made on oath argues its importance. We take an oath in matters of moment, not in trifles. Petty interests are felt to be beneath the solemnity and dignity of an appeal to Heaven. Secondly, an oath is an indication that the thing assevered appears till then in more or less uncertainty. It is the province of an oath to give assurance of something which was previously open to question.

III. TO EACH ONE AMONG US THE ABOLITION OF TIME WILL BE THE HOUR OF OUR OWN DEATH. "This I say, brethren, the time is short." Yes, that is the main point which the oath may be taken to imply—the infinite importance in God's estimation of the time that remains to you upon earth. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

The end of time :—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE END OF TIME? Time, as far as man has any concern with it, is that portion of duration which is commensurate with the existence of our world, and which is measured by its diurnal and annual revolutions. It began when this world began to exist. The end of time, and the end of the world, are, then, expressions of the same import.

II. WHEN WILL THE EVENT DENOTED BY THESE EXPRESSIONS ARRIVE? We learn from our text that it will arrive when the mystery of God shall be finished. God's great object in creating this world and its inhabitants was to gratify and glorify Himself. Now, God at once glorifies and gratifies Himself when He displays His perfections in His works. Some of His perfections, as, for instance, His power, wisdom, and goodness, He displayed in the creation of the world; and they, as well as some other perfections of His nature, are still displayed in its providential government. But the principal display of His perfections is made in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, the great object to which all His works of creation and providence ultimately refer. Agreeably, inspiration informs us, that for Jesus Christ all things were created; and that to Him there is given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him. When the purposes for which this kingdom was given to Christ, and set up in the world, are accomplished, the mystery of God, mentioned in our text, will be finished. Now the purposes for which this kingdom was given to Christ include two things. The first is, the complete salvation of all who are given to Him by the Father. The second is, the complete and final subjugation of His enemies.

III. WHAT WILL BE THE ATTENDING CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THIS EVENT? 1. With respect to ourselves, considered as individuals, the end of time, or, which is the same thing to us, the end of our lives will be attended by circumstances, and followed by consequences, most important and interesting. (1) We shall then be separated at once from all temporal and earthly objects. (2) With the end of time our state of probation and our day of grace will end. We shall be removed from our present religious privileges and means of spiritual improvement. (3) When time ends, eternity will begin. The moment in which we leave this temporary and mutable state, we shall enter a state which is eternal, and, of course, unchangeable.

2. The circumstances and consequences which will attend and follow the end of time with respect to the human

race. (1) When the end of time shall arrive, the general resurrection will take place. (2) At the end of time, the day of judgment, the great day for which all other days were made, will arrive. 3. It remains only to consider what will then be the fate of the globe which we inhabit. Then the gold, the silver, the jewels, and all the glittering but delusive objects, for which so many thousands have bartered their souls, shall be destroyed. Lessons: 1. In view of this subject, however insignificant, how unworthy of an immortal being, do all merely temporal and earthly pursuits appear! 2. In full view of the end of time let me ask, are you all, my hearers, prepared for it? (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The end of time*:—I. THERE IS A PERIOD SET AT WHICH TIME SHALL BE NO MORE. 1. Time had a beginning. There was a day, a year, that was the first, before which there was not another. But eternity was before, and will be after time; which therefore appears at present like a small island lifting up its head in the midst of the ocean. 2. Time has run from the beginning, and is running on in an uninterrupted course of addition of moments, hours, days, months, and years. 3. Time will come to an end. It has run long, but it will run out at length. The last sand in the glass of this world will pass. The period is set in the Divine decree, the last day and hour, though no man knows them. (1) This present world shall be no more; these heavens and earth shall pass away by the general conflagration (2 Pet. iii. 10). (2) New years shall be no more. The year will come, the month, the day, hour and minute, after which there shall never be another. Let us improve our years then for eternity, and count our days so as to apply our hearts to wisdom. (3) The different seasons will be no more. There will be no more summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. There will be an eternal spring in heaven; but an eternal winter, as it were, in hell, where is gnashing of teeth. (4) The business of this life shall be no more. There shall be no more tilling of the ground, tending of flocks, merchandising, nor trades. How unhappy must they be who have no pleasure nor satisfaction in anything else, since these are not to last! (5) The means of sustaining this life shall be no more. There shall be no more eating, drinking, nor sleeping. (6) Relations shall be no more. Time going dissolves them all, as fellow-travellers part when come to their journey's end. There shall be no more magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants (Job iii. 19). Only the relation betwixt Christ and His people as head and members, which is not of this world, shall remain; and so the relation to God as His children (Luke xx. 35, 36); who are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. (7) Space for repentance shall be no more. (8) Tribulation and adversity of the godly shall be no more. (9) The prosperity and comfort of the wicked (Luke xvi. 25) shall be no more. II. THE WEIGHT OF THIS TRUTH, AND ITS CONCERN TO MANKIND. 1. That it is of weight and concern to them appears in its being sworn to them; which implies—(1) That men are very heedless about it, and slow to believe it, and be impressed with it. (2) A legal intimation made to them of its ending. (3) That the period of time is unalterably fixed, the bounds of it set, beyond which it cannot go; for it is set by an oath. 2. The weight of the thing lies in these three. (1) That then that which concerns mankind's happiness or misery is completed; the state of probation is over, and the state of recompense takes place in perfection, both as to their bodies and souls. (2) That then eternity succeeds the state of all for ever unalterable, no end to be expected more. (3) That now or never must be done what is done for eternity. Use. Then be exhorted suitably to improve this intimation of time's ending. 1. Look beyond time, this world, and the state of things in it; carry your views into the other world, to eternity (2 Cor. iv. 18). 2. Lift your hearts from off the things of time, and set them on those that are eternal (Col. iii. 2). 3. Use this world passingly, as pilgrims and strangers in it (1 Cor. vii. 29–31). 4. Let not the frowns of this world, the troubles and trials of the present life, make deep impression on us: they will not last. 5. Be not lifted up with the world's smiles, nor value yourselves on worldly prosperity; for time will put an end to this also. 6. Improve time while it lasts, for the ends it is given you for. (1) Laying a good foundation for eternity, getting out of your natural state into the state of grace, believing on Christ, and repenting of sin. (2) Living to the honour of God, endeavouring to act in your sphere for propagating the name and kingdom of Christ. (3) Serving your generation in usefulness to mankind, seeking to forward the spiritual and temporal good of others; as David did (Acts xiii. 36). (*T. Boston.*) *The mystery of God finished with time*:—I. We shall consider the MYSTERY OF GOD IN HIS KINGDOM AMONG MEN. 1. We shall consider what that mystery of

God is. A mystery is a secret or hidden thing. 2. I will show in what respects it is a mystery, the mystery of God; or that the kingdom of Christ, and His management, is a mystery, the mystery of God. II. We shall consider THE MYSTERY OF GOD AS BEGUN AND CARRIED ON IN TIME. 1. We shall consider the first opening of the mystery. (1) In the promulgation of the promise of the gospel (Gen. iii. 15). (2) In the offering of the first sacrifices, with the skins whereof our naked first parents were clothed (Gen. iii. 21). 2. We shall consider the gradual opening of the mystery. Of this we have an account in Heb. i. 1. 3. We shall consider the progress of the mystery. (1) It has never been interrupted since it began in paradise; the salvation of the Church has all along been carried on, and matters managed for that end. (2) It has made such progress, that by this time it is drawing towards the period of finishing it. (3) It is going on in our day, in the same powerful hand that has managed it all along. But for a more full view of the mystery, as executed in time, we shall consider the eight following particulars of this mysterious kingdom, in every part of which there is a mystery. 1. The head of it, Jesus Christ, is a mystery. And He is a mystery, a mysterious Head: (1) In the constitution of His person, being God and man in one person. (2) In His offices. (3) In all circumstances about Him. 2. The subjects of it, believers, are a mystery too. They are in the world indeed, but unknown to the world (1 John iii. 1). 3. The erection and conservation of it is a mystery (Luke xvii. 20). (1) The beginnings of it were very small; how vastly soever it has spread. (2) The means of erecting and setting it up were very unlikely and unusual, viz., the despised preaching of the gospel (Psa. cx. 2). (3) The opposition to it from the beginning has been very great; yet it has made its way in face of all opposition. (4) The means of keeping it up, even such as it was set up by. Not the power of the sword, but the preaching and teaching of the word of the gospel, and setting that home on men's consciences; prayers, and tears, patient suffering even unto death (Rev. xii. 11). 4. The seat of it is a mystery too. 5. The extent of it is a mystery, whether it is considered—(1) In respect of the kind of jurisdiction He has in it. (a) The kingdom of grace is in His hand. (b) The kingdom of glory is in His hand too (Luke xxii. 29, 30). (c) The kingdom of providence is in His hand likewise. (2) In respect of the bounds of it. It extends itself over both worlds (Matt. xxviii. 18; Rev. i. 18). 6. The privileges of it are a mystery. (1) Their union with Christ is a mystery (Eph. v. 32). (2) Their justification is a mystery. (3) Their sanctification is a mystery. (4) Their perseverance in grace is a mystery. 7. The life and practice of it is a mystery. 8. The manner of the conduct and management of it is a mystery. It is the manner of this kingdom—(1) To prefer the most unlikely, balking them that stand fairest for the preference in all human appearance (Matt. xx. 16). (2) To let things go to an extremity, to the utmost point of hopelessness, before a hand be put to help them, and set them right again (Deut. xxxii. 36). (3) To give the sharpest treatment to the greatest favourites. This is not the manner of men, but it is the manner of God (Psa. lxxiii. 5, 14). (4) To meet men with astonishing strokes going in the way that God bade them, while they have a fair sunshine that are going in the way of their own hearts (Eccles. viii. 14). (5) To lay by accepted petitions, and let them long lie by, time after time, while yet unacceptable requests are quickly granted. (6) To answer accepted prayers quickly with some one terrible thing or other, which yet are to be graciously and bountifully answered in due time (Psa. lxxv. 5). III. We are to consider THE MYSTERY OF GOD AS FINISHED WITH TIME. 1. Let us consider when this mystery of God shall be finished. 2. Wherein does the finishing of this mystery lie? It lies in these three things following. (1) The accomplishment of the remaining prophecies. (2) The gathering in of all the elect. (3) The completing of the salvation of the Church of the elect. This is the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father mentioned in 1 Cor. xv. 24. 3. It remains to show the import and consequence of this finishing the mystery of God. It is of greatest importance to the honour of God, and to the children of men. For then—(1) The eternal purpose of God concerning mankind is fulfilled; the contrivance laid from eternity in the depth of wisdom about them, is executed. (2) The covenant between the Father and Christ, the second Adam, is then fulfilled on both hands. (3) Then the whole frame of the ordinances, now or since Adam's fall, in use in the world for bringing in of sinners, and edifying of saints, is laid by. (4) Then the matter of the Divine conduct towards mankind is altered so that it is quite new (Rev. xxi. 5). (5) Then Christ's conquest is complete, His enemies made His footstool, which He is this day in expectation of (Heb. x. 12, 13). 4. Then the mystery is

opened, and appears in a full light; though before veiled, the veil is then taken off. 5. There will be no more mystery of God; then it is finished. IV. We shall consider THE RELATION BETWEEN THE MYSTERY OF GOD AND TIME. 1. Time is the space appointed for the mystery of God its being executed. 2. The subsistence or continuation of time depends on the mystery. Had there been no mystery of God to have been carried on, time once polluted with sin, had ended soon after it began. Hence we may learn: 1. Whence it comes to pass that there is so much stumbling of wicked men at the Divine conduct by Christ in the world. The matter is: it is a mystery, and their natural blindness hinders them to see it, so that they know it not (1 Cor. ii. 14). 2. How the godly come to have other thoughts of it; and true Christians admire the beauty and glory of it, which carnal men despise. It is the mystery of God, which He reveals to His friends and fearers of His name (Psa. xxv. 14). 3. No reason to despise religion because the world generally do so. 4. Time is not continued as a sleep without a design. Oh, that men would consider that it is lengthened out on a particular design; which, being compassed, it shall end for good and all! 5. It is not this world's business, but Heaven's business, that is the great design of the continuing of time. 6. The mystery of God must be a matter of singular excellency, and of the last importance, that for it time is continued. 7. The mystery of God has, in the execution of it, been of long continuance; but it is drawing to a close. 8. When there is no more time requisite for the mystery of God, there will be no more time for other things neither; time will end with it; for it is for the sake of it that it is continued. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8-11. **Go and take the little book.**—*The making of a minister* (with Ezek. ii. 8-10, iii. 1-3):—The symbolical scene in the case of Ezekiel was enacted over again in the case of John; only with such surroundings of majesty and magnificence as were but befitting after John's humiliated but glorified Master had sat down on His throne in heaven. Now, in the first place, we see in that fine symbolical scene God's own immediate way of making a minister—a book. A book plays a great part in the salvation of men. A book is brought down from heaven to earth—a book written in heaven lies open in the hand of the heavenly messenger, and the salvation “of many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” lies wrapped up in that little book. “Go thou,” said the voice from heaven to John, “Go thou and take the book.” Now that is being both said and done every day among ourselves. There is the Book, and there are the people, and there somewhere among the people is the man chosen of God to take the Book, and to make the Book his own, and then to carry it to the people; “Go,” the Spirit of God says to that man, “Go, leave all other occupations and all other pursuits; give thyself, body and soul, day and night, and all the days of thy life, to that Book.” “Take the book and eat it,” said the angel to the seer. You will observe that the angel did not say, “Take the book and read it.” Had it been any other book but the Book it was, to read it himself and to have it written out and sent to all the Churches would have been enough. But that was not enough for this Book. Interpret the Bible like any other book, it is the fashion of our day to say, and in some senses that is an excellent enough rule; but that was not the angel's rule that day to John. All other books in John's day were to be read, but this Book was to be eaten. Yes, eaten. Clearly, then, this is not an ordinary Book. Clearly this is like no other book. Job said: “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Eat, then, this same meal; eat it both minister and people; and eat it for your first food every morning. It will do for you what no earthly food, the best and the most necessary, can do; see that all its strength and all its sweetness fills your heart before you eat any other meat; read God's Book, and have it next your heart to defend yourself against the influences of men that attempt to overthrow you. “Enough of that; bring me my Bible,” his widow told me one of my old elders used to say, as they read to him the morning newspaper; “enough of that; bring me my Bible.” The Word of God was more to that saint than all else, and his widow and I rejoice to tell the story after he has gone home to his rest. The Word of God was more to him than that which is to some of you your necessary food. But what does this mean—this extraordinary thing, “It was in my mouth sweet as honey, but as soon as I had eaten it my belly was bitter”? The best way, the only way indeed to find out all that means is to eat the same roll ourselves, and then to observe what passes within ourselves. Religion is an experimental science. Just you eat the Book now before you as Ezekiel and John ate it, and then tell us

what takes place with you. I will tell you what will take place. The Word of God will be bitter in your mouth every morning, bitter with memories of yesterday and yester-night. Yes, the grace of God, and the abiding and abounding mercy of God, they are in His blessed Word always passing sweet to a penitent sinner. Ah, the truth is that the power, and the holiness, and the heavenly beauty of God's Word is the daily and the sweet experience of all those who make the Word of God their earliest and their most necessary food. But after this, when this sweet Book descends into what David calls our "inward parts"; when the holy, and the just, and the good Word of God enters our guilty conscience and our corrupt heart, then there is bitterness indeed; for a sense of sin, as we so lightly speak, is then awakened in the soul, and with that new sense comes a new bitterness, compared with which the waters of Marah are milk and honey. "Son of man, eat that thou findest," says Jehovah to Ezekiel in the vision. "Take it, and eat it up," said the angel in like manner to John. Neither the prophet nor the apostle was asked or allowed to pick and choose, as we say. They were not to eat the sweet, and spit out the bitter. They were not to keep rolling the sweet morsels under their tongue, and to keep their inward parts strangers to their inward share of the Divine Book. I know this Scripture will not be sweet to all who hear it; but if it is at first bitter it must not be cast out. We must allow ourselves to read and preach and hear the whole Word of God. "Son of man, eat that thou findest"; and again, "Take the roll and eat it up." It is a fine study to take up the Old Testament, and to trace all through it how prophet follows prophet, and psalmist follows psalmist, each several prophet and psalmist taking home to himself all that the prophets and the psalmist had said and sung before him; and then, having made the Book their own by reading it, by praying over it, by singing it, by eating it, as the figure is, then when their own call came they prophesied prophecies, and sang psalms, new psalms, new prophecies as the people's need was—never contenting themselves with just countersigning and repeating what any former prophet had said, what any former psalmist had sung, however great and however good in his time that prophet and psalmist had been. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *God's Word*:—The "little book" may be taken to illustrate God's redemptive truth, or the gospel. I. The gospel is BROUGHT TO MAN FROM HEAVEN. The was in which alienated humanity can be brought into a loving sympathy with God transcends human discovery. Divine messengers brought this "little book" to man, and Christ embodied it. II. This gospel is TO BE APPROPRIATED BY MAN. "Eat it up." The spirit of this "little book" must become the inspiring and the regnant spirit of our being. III. This gospel has A TWOFOLD EFFECT ON MAN. "Sweet" in its disclosures of infinite love and promises of future blessedness; "bitter" in its convictions of sin, reproofs, and denunciations. It produces in the soul sorrow and joy, sighs and songs; and its bitterness will remain as long as one particle of depravity continues in the heart. IV. This gospel, APPROPRIATED, QUALIFIES MAN FOR HIS MISSION (ver. 11). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Take it, and eat it up.*—*On eating books*:—There are many different kinds of books in the world. I. THERE ARE SOME WHICH HAVE NOTHING IN THEM. They are not directly harmful, but neither are they of much good. When you have read them you can scarcely remember anything that they contained. They are very much like a kind of pastry which we call "trife." The moment you put it into your mouth it vanishes into thin air. Beware of books which only please you for the moment, and do nothing that would make you better or wiser. II. THERE ARE OTHER BOOKS WHICH ARE STUPEFYING. They dull the senses. They are like what we call "opiates," which make men feel heavy and stupid. Be careful never to read books which merely please by soothing and dulling the senses. III. THERE ARE OTHER BOOKS WHICH ARE UNDULY EXCITING. I do not object to a reasonable amount of interest. Every book worth the reading must in one sense excite us; but I am not now speaking of books which excite you by the amount of true knowledge which they give, or noble enthusiasm which they impart, but those which excite you by the feverish curiosity with which they fire you. I earnestly warn you against every book which makes it more difficult for you to do your every-day duty. IV. THERE ARE OTHER BOOKS WHICH ARE VERY HARD TO DIGEST. I have no doubt some of you think, for instance, that books on arithmetic or English grammar are very indigestible; but if you take a little at a time, and masticate that well before you take more, you will find that even hard books will agree with you wonderfully, and that you will be stronger and better for having taken them. Children suffer from indigestion, in learning difficult tasks, by taking too much at a time. The great secret of success is to take a little often, and to see that you

learn well every little lesson, and thus make it your own, before you take more. V. THERE ARE OTHER BOOKS WHICH ARE DECIDEDLY POISONOUS. Take care that you do not eat them. These books speak well of sin, and kindly of evil. Beware of any book that does not agree with the Bible in its estimate of good and of evil. VI. And now I want to tell you of this one Book—THE BIBLE—of which you need never grow weary. (D. Davies.) *The proper use of Divine truth*:—Divine truth is not something for intellectual speculation, it is not something for memory, but diet for the life. It must be transmuted into the moral blood, and sent through the heart into every fibre of our being. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *The Word of God to be pondered*:—"Read the Word of God much," said General Gordon, "but chew it more." That is pondering. Make a practice of it; make a rule of it. (Bp. Talbot.) *Thou must prophesy again*.—*Rules for Christian effort*:—I. CHRISTIAN EFFORT MUST BE PERSONAL. "Thou." The faculties of the individual man must be excited to activity in the cause of God. The most magnificent achievements of the human mind have been wrought out in lonely musings and lonely labours. If we would hew the rugged forms of our fellow-men into the symmetry and grace of Christian discipleship we must not be content to give subscriptions for evangelistic purposes; but we must feel a responsibility that is all our own, and while acting in brotherly union we must also act as if we had been specially called to a task in which no one has so much to do as ourselves. II. CHRISTIAN EFFORT MUST BE PROPORTIONED TO PERSONAL ABILITY. "Thou must prophesy." John had the prophetic gift, and he was to use it. God has called thousands to His work, and though all cannot do the same thing, all are to do their best in that which they can do. A man with a divided mind, with his mind in part intent on his own ease, and in part only on the work of the Lord, will accomplish nothing worth naming. But let him unite his faculties, let him bring all the strength and all the determination of his soul to bear on the task to which he is called, let him throw the glow and enthusiasm of his nature into his duty with the bold avowal, "This one thing I do," and though a thousand difficulties withstand him, he will sweep on to the consummation of his plans. III. CHRISTIAN EFFORT MUST BE REPEATED. "Thou must prophesy again." Nothing great can be done all at once. It was only after many struggles that Wilberforce succeeded in the abolition of the slave trade. Nor are we to think that any strange thing has befallen us, or to deem it a reason for suspending our labours, if months or even years elapse before we see the moral and religious reformation at which we are aiming. We cannot reasonably expect that rude, ignorant, vicious men will all at once be transformed into melodious Davids, magnificent Isaiahs, or saintly Johns. We cannot reasonably expect that Babylon will come crashing to the ground at our first shout, and its ruins start at a touch into the majesty of a holy city. We shall have to "prophesy again"; we shall have to repeat our efforts before we see "the pleasure of the Lord prosper in our hand." IV. CHRISTIAN EFFORT MUST ENLARGE THE SCOPE OF ITS MOVEMENTS. "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples," &c. The more we do, the more we see there is to do. Patriotism owns that this is a land which, from white cliff in the south to sternest precipice in the north, is worthy of any labour and any self-sacrifice. If the statesman will contend from early evening until the morning crimson the windows of the Senate House for measures by which he intends to enlarge the liberties and increase the happiness of the people—if the soldier will stride over the field of deadly fight and rush through the fiery breach that the foeman's drum may not be beaten in our street, nor the foeman's flag be lifted among our old ancestral oaks, it surely becomes us to raise ourselves to the level of Christian patriotism, and to stretch out our prayers and our labours so that they shall include the whole nation. (G. Marrat.)

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1-19. Rise, and measure the temple of God.—*The living temple of Christ's Church and the two witnesses of the Word written and the sacraments*:—The temple and altar, and them that worshipped therein, were capable of measurement. They were not like the unorganised multitude, formless, creedless, undisciplined, without the court. The temple, the altar, and its priesthood and the worshippers, have strength

of form and organisation, and the beauty of order. So the apostles organise the Church, set in order its worship, establish its discipline. Standing before the Incarnate Son of God, who in the spiritual organism of His temple, the Church, reveals Himself, and bearing their corroborating testimony to the faith are the two witnesses of the sacraments and the written Word. 1. Consider first the witness of the sacraments. (1) They are the instrumental life-givers. For Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is to the new creation what God, "Creation's secret force," is to the old. (2) So likewise the sacraments enlighten. Baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, declares the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity as the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. It manifests our sinful condition and the need of a washing away of sin. (3) The sacraments are witnesses. The Church, filled with sacramental life, bears witness to the world. 2. Turn we next to the other great witness, the written Word. The written Word self-evidences its own inspiration. (*Bp. Grafton.*) *The extent and limit of the true Church of God.*—At the time of this prophecy the literal temple was no more. The once-holy city was defiled by the "abomination of desolation." Then the true temple, the true holy city, existed in "the Church of the living God." The outer enclosure is not to be reckoned as a part of the temple in this Divinely appointed remeasurement. All this most impressively sets forth the fact that Zion's external buildings cover a much wider space than the real heart-worshippers whom God will own. There may be, and there are, large masses of people at the outer fringe of our Christian services. But if now a heavenly messenger were to come among us who was appointed to measure the real living temple of God, would it not turn out that, of a very large part of our surroundings, the order would be, "Measure it not"? This measurement from on high is ever going on. And if the great Lord of the Church saw fit to show us in a vision who are in His Church and who are not, many would be without whom we thought were in, and many within whom we thought were out. But not by any human hands can the true temple of God be built; nor yet by any human eye can its limits be discerned. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *The measuring of the temple.*—I. THE MEASURING. But as in those other representations we cannot think that material earthly buildings are meant, or any literal measurements whether of city or temple, so here we regard the temple as telling of that glorious spiritual fabric of which we so often read under like imagery in the Epistles of St. Paul, and the measuring is a metaphor to signify that careful investigation and scrutiny whereby true knowledge is gained. 1. God has an ideal for everything, a standard to which He would have it conform. He had in the creation of the world. And He looks down from heaven—so we are told—to see what is done upon the earth; He taketh account of all that men do. 2. Christ is the ideal Man, and therefore called "the Son of Man." He did in all things so answer to His Father's intent that He was the "beloved Son in whom" God was "well pleased." 3. And this "measuring" is continually going on. There is an inward monitor as well as an outward one. 4. How grateful we should be for this! "Lord, with what care Thou hast begirt us round!" so sings holy George Herbert; and one evidence of this care is in the constant bringing before our consciences the rigid rule of right. II. THE MEASURED THAT ARE SPOKEN OF HERE. The temple, the altar, and the people. 1. The temple of God. It was a symbol and type of all Israel, if not of the whole Church of God (St. Paul, "In whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple unto the Lord"). Therefore we may take "the temple of God" as representing the Church in its outward form. Now, God has His ideal for this. What is it? By this supreme test will all our Church organisations be tried. What fruit have they borne in that which is the end of all religion? No antiquity, orthodoxy, catholicity, popularity, beauty, wealth, or any other such plea will stand if God's standard be not answered to, and His demand for "good fruit" be not met. The axe will fall, and the tree will go down. 2. The altar. This also was to be measured. We may take "the altar" as the symbol of the worship of the Church. Is our worship fervent? On that altar was an ever-burning fire. Is it spiritual? Does it ascend up to God as the smoke of the sacrifice mounted up into the heavens—symbol, beautiful, striking, appropriate, of that uplifting of the heart, that real outgoing of the soul after God, which belongs to all true worship? And, above all, is it sacrificial? The altar was for sacrifice. Worship that has not this element in it will be rejected when that measurement of the altar told of here takes place. Sacrifice means giving up something which we should like to keep. Was not Christ's sacrifice such? Is not

all sacrifice such? 3. The people. "Them that worship therein"—so we read. Now, the Divine ideal for these may be learnt by noting what was not to be measured. And we are told in ver. 2 that "the court which is without the temple . . . measure it not." It was to be cast out, left out of the reckoning altogether. Now, the outer court of the temple was the addition of Herod; he was given to erecting magnificent buildings, and the addition of this outer court did undoubtedly add much to the splendour of the whole fabric. But such court had no place in the tabernacle nor in the temple of Solomon or that of Zerubbabel. But Herod had made this outer court in the temple at Jerusalem. It was thronged by all manner of people. There it was the money-changers had their tables, and they who bought and sold doves. The Gentiles might come there, though they might not pass into what was especially the temple, and which was sacred to Israelites only. And so it represented all those outer-court worshippers, those mixed multitudes which are found associated with God's true people everywhere—of them, but not truly belonging to them. III. THE MEANING OF ALL THIS. It was because a time of sore trial was imminent, close at hand. God ever has, even in the worst of times, a remnant. And He takes notice of them, and will keep them securely, whilst those who are not as they are subjected to His sore judgments. The measuring means preservation for the faithful, judgment for all else. (*S. Conway, B.A.*) *The cause of right on earth*:—I. THE CAUSE OF RIGHT ON THIS EARTH HAS ITS MEASURING RULE (vers. 1, 2). 1. In the human world there is right and wrong. There is the temple of God, &c. At the same time there is the court that is outside—a sphere discarded by the right and trampling on the holy. This, however, is only for a time. 2. Right here has its measuring line. Take the "temple" here as the emblem of right on the earth, and the "reed" as that of the moral law of God—the law that measures moral character. It is a plummet that sounds the deepest depths of being: it is a moral analyst to test the quality of every thought, affection, and deed. II. THE CAUSE OF RIGHT ON THIS EARTH HAS ITS MIGHTY DEFENDERS (vers. 3-6). 1. They do their work in sadness. "Clothed in sackcloth." It is not a light work to stand up against a corrupt world and struggle against an age grinning with selfishness, sensuality, and cupidity. 2. They contribute Divine light. The "olive trees" fed the lamps and the "candlesticks" reflected the light. Were it not for the Divine defenders of the right, grand heroes in moral history, all the lamps of truth would go out, and the whole race would be mantled in midnight. 3. They exert tremendous power (ver. 5). Their words flash devouring flames, so shake the corrupt moral firmament under which their contemporaries are living, that the very heavens seem shut up and the rolling streams of life seem turned into blood. III. THE CAUSE OF RIGHT ON THE EARTH HAS ITS TERRIBLE ANTAGONISTS (vers. 7-13). 1. The antagonists of the right are malignant; they not only murder, but they exult in their cruelty. The spirit of persecution is an infernal virus that gallops through the veins of the intolerant persecutor, and physical violence is the weapon. 2. The antagonists of the right are ever frustrated. (1) Their victims were Divinely reanimated. (2) Their victims ascended to heaven. (3) With their ascension terrible calamities befell the earth. IV. THE CAUSE OF RIGHT ON THE EARTH IS DESTINED TO TRIUMPH (vers. 14-19). 1. The rapture and adoration of the good. "The kingdoms of this world." What have they been? What are they now? Hellish mimicries of eternal right and power. Like muddy bubbles on the great stream of life, they have broken into the clear and fathomless river of rectitude and will appear no more, and this will continue for ever and ever. Well, then, might the righteous worship and thank God. 2. The increased accessibility of heaven. "The temple of God was opened." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The temple of God*:—I. ITS PECULIARITY. By "the temple of God," which John is commanded to measure, understand the true Church of Christ. The altar of incense is named, to denote the militant state of the Church, whose employment is prayer; in distinction from that of the Church triumphant, which is praise. The censor is in the hand of the "kings and priests unto God" below, the harp is in the hands of those above. That the measurement is to be confined to the altar and worshippers within the temple is obvious also from the refusal of its extension to the court; "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not." If whatever is without the temple be precluded from the measurement, all that to which it applies must of course be considered within. II. ITS MEASUREMENT. Rise and see how far we have proceeded with the prophecies. Observe in what state we left the Church! Let a correct measurement be taken before we proceed further. Measure how far the building is advanced, and see what remains

to bring it to perfection. See what injuries the temple of God has sustained from fierce and sanguinary attacks. It has suffered much, but behold it still abides. See now what the work is, after weathering its storms. "Rise and measure the temple of God." Measure too the altar. Take the dimensions of the altar of incense which has been reared for prayer and praise. Take the degree of faith in the everliving Intercessor. Measure the devotions of the sanctuary. Mark the plenitude and purity of the incense rising before the throne. Measure too the worshippers. Observe the number of professing Christians. Measure the spiritual stature, and gauge the heart of each one. Measure them that worship therein. There must be a certain breadth, and length, and depth, and height of character. There must be a certain depth of humility and self-renunciation, a certain height of faith and devotion, a certain length of integrity and zeal. View them as worshippers, and there is a certain height to which they must attain, in feeble imitation of the dignity of Him that sits upon the throne. The breadth of the believer's principles, the depth of his emotions, a certain breadth of sincerity and charity, the length of his hopes, the height of his joys, are far beyond the narrow bounds within which his whole being was formerly confined. His soul is enlarged. He is created anew in Christ Jesus. He has risen above this earth, and has attained a spiritual stature that brings him into fellowship with the Father, and with His son Jesus Christ. His conversation is in heaven. III. THE DESECRATION OF THE COURT BY THE GENTILES is the remaining particular in relation to this temple. This court is nominal Christianity, which now, for the first time, began to assume a distinct character. It was the necessary consequence of an alliance between the Church and the world, it has been far more prejudicial to the real interests of the Church than the most virulent persecution. This court is further said to be "given unto the Gentiles." It remains only to speak of the court being given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city to be trodden under foot. "I will give power," it is afterwards said, "unto My two witnesses and they shall prophesy clothed in sackcloth." It brings before us the permission of the awful reign of anti-christian darkness, for the development of the whole principles of evil in contrast with good. It coincides with the surrender of the Church by God, to that ardent desire for worldly conformity which the severest chastisements had failed to repress. They would not retain the gospel in its simplicity, but would rely upon an arm of flesh; therefore God suffered them to be spoiled by thieves and robbers, who entered not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbed up some other way. (*G. Rogers.*) *The right temple:*—Jesus Christ in what He has done as the way in which God dwells with us, and we with God, is the temple that we are thus to measure. I. First, this is a temple that ENDURETH FOR EVER; a temple of eternity, a house, as the apostle calls it, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Blessed are they that dwell in this temple. And who are they that take such account of it as to understand the eternity of it, the certainty of it, that Christ is indeed a house not made with hands, that He is indeed eternal in the heavens. II. A temple of PLENTY. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple." Ah, God the Father is well pleased, Christ is satisfied with the travail of His soul; and "we," poor sinners saved by mercy, brought out of eternal privation into this eternal plenty, "shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple"; a temple from which sin and death are for ever excluded; a temple into which sin and death cannot enter. III. A temple of GOVERNMENT, as you may see in the last verse of this chapter: "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament." Now heaven here means the New Testament dispensation, and there will never be another dispensation after the one we have now. But will there not be glorification? That will not be another dispensation; that will only be a continuation of the present. It is true preaching will end, the ordinances of the present dispensation will end; but we shall always have the same Jesus Christ, and the same God, and the same covenant, and the same life, and the same sanctification. Christ's kingdom shall reign through all ages, and never be moved; and everything must be subservient to the government of Christ's kingdom. And hence it is said that when this temple was opened "there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and a great hail." What are the lightnings? Why, God's Word. His arrows shall go forth as lightning, whether it be to strike an Ananias and Sapphira dead, or to pierce the hearts of three thousand sinners, and make them cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" whether it be for judgment or for mercy. These lightnings are God's Word; and when the temple is opened, that

is when Christ is revealed, then these lightnings come. And there were "voices." There is the voice of salvation: there is the voice of "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." There is the voice of the deep soul trouble; there are the various voices of all the experiences of the people of God: glorious voices of exaltation, triumph, victory, and satisfaction. And then there are thunderings: and what are they? Why, God's Word. The child of God sometimes gets rather sleepy, some thundering Scripture will come into his mind, create fears, and doubts, and tremblings. This is what one calls being called into the secret place of thunder—but it does the soul good. And an earthquake. Why, regeneration is an earthquake. It swallows up what you were before; swallows up your former hope, and makes you feel that you yourself will be swallowed up in hell. Many a sinner, when God begins His work in this earthquake-like way, has exclaimed with the Psalmist, "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." "And a great hail." What is that? Storms of persecution and tribulation. If the lightning seem to be against you, yet your God holds the lightnings in His hand, and though the thunderings may seem to be against you, yet the Lord governs those thunderings, and though revolutions alarm you, yet the Lord governs these changes, and though you may be persecuted, and storms and persecutions may fall upon you, yet the Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. (*Jas. Wells.*) The holy city shall they tread under foot.—*The true Church reduced*:—The Church of God will be greatly reduced in its apparent numbers by the open desertion of the powers of the world. This desertion will begin in a professed indifference to any particular form of Christianity, under the pretence of universal toleration; which toleration will proceed from no true spirit of charity. . . . The pretended toleration will go far beyond a just toleration, even as it regards the different sects of Christians. For governments will pretend an indifference to all, and will give a protection in preference to none. All establishments will be set aside. From the toleration of the most pestilent heresies, they will proceed to the toleration of Mahometanism, atheism, and at last proceed to the positive persecution of the truth of Christianity. In these times the temple of God will be reduced almost to the holy place, *i.e.*, to the small number of real Christians who worship the Father in spirit, and regulate their doctrine, and their worship, and their whole conduct strictly by the Word of God. The merely nominal Christians will all desert the profession of the truth when the powers of the world desert it. And this tragic event I take to be typified by the order to St. John to measure the temple and the altar, &c. (*Bp. Horsley.*)

Vers. 3-13. **I will give power unto My two witnesses.**—*The preacher a witness and a prophet*:—1. The prophecy under consideration gives us an undeniable evidence of the Divinity and truth of the gospel. 2. The prophecy under consideration assures us of the continuance of the gospel ministry. 3. We are here taught what is the character of Christ's approved ministers, and what are the duties which he requires of them. (1) They, as witnesses, are to bear testimony to the gospel by professing their own faith in it, by exhibiting the evidences of its Divinity, by defending it against the cavils of unbelievers, by exemplifying the virtues of it in their conversation, and by sacrificing in its cause their worldly interest, and even their lives, if occasion should require. (2) They, as prophets, must preach the Word with plainness of speech, adapting themselves to common capacities: they must speak with demonstration of the Spirit and with power, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God: they must declare the whole counsel of God, however disgusting any part of it may be to vicious and corrupt minds: they must reprove prevailing iniquities, and confute licentious errors, whoever may practise the former or patronise the latter. 4. This prophecy teaches us that in times of prevailing infidelity and corruption there is always a pointed opposition to the ministers of the gospel. If men wish to exterminate the religion of Christ, they will first oppose the means of its support; and of these one of the chief is a learned and godly ministry. 5. We are taught in this prophecy from whence arises the enmity of wicked men against the stated teachers of religion. St. John says that when the witnesses shall be slain, they who dwell on earth "shall rejoice over them, because these two prophets tormented them." How did these prophets torment them? Not by persecution; for they possessed neither the power nor the authority to persecute; but merely by proclaiming those solemn truths which condemn the practice, expose the guilt, and announce the punishment of irreclaimable sinners. 6. Another observation which

here presents itself to us is that the Christian Church is meek, humble, and peaceable. So she is represented in this prophecy. She suffers persecution from her enemies, but does not persecute them in return. Her deliverances are effected by the hand of God, not by her own hand. The main instruments of her defence are the excellency of her religion, the purity of her works, and the fervour of her prayers. These weapons of her warfare have proved mighty through God to confound the devices and defeat the power of those who sought her overthrow. 7. We are taught the great efficacy of the prayers of good men. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

The two witnesses :—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE TWO WITNESSES. "The two witnesses" are the Son and Spirit of God; the doctrines of their Divinity, or, more particularly, the justifying righteousness of the one, and the regenerating influence of the other.

1. These are the two principal witnesses of God in the Church. They are witnesses of the highest credibility, and to whom alone God would commit His cause. They are best qualified to give evidence upon a subject in all the particulars of which they have been personally concerned. They are the parties to whose care the whole affairs of the Church have been officially consigned. They alone are acquainted with the whole mind and will of God. 2. They are frequently spoken of as witnesses for God in other parts of the Scripture (Isa. vii. 14, lv. 4; John v. 31, 32, xv. 26; 2 Cor. i. 22; Heb. x. 14, 15; 1 John v. 6-10, 20, &c.).

3. This view of the two witnesses is sustained by the preceding allusion. Their emblems are "water and blood." In the court of the temple are the water and the blood. Here are the altar of burnt-offering and the brazen sea; or, in other words, the "water and the blood." These are the only furniture of the court. The altar is between the entrance to the court and the brazen sea; and the brazen sea is between the altar and the door of the tabernacle. None without passing by these could enter the holy place. 4. The two witnesses we have named agree with their denomination as prophets. The claim of the Son and the Spirit to the title of the two prophets of God in the Church, above all others, is substantiated by these two Scripture declarations: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," and,

"When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." 5. Our selection of these witnesses accords with the metaphorical illustration of them in the fourth verse. They are the olive trees from which, and the golden pipes through which, the oil of grace is supplied to the Church of God. These olive trees are represented to John as still standing before the God of the earth. Are they not then "He who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and the Spirit of Christ which testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow? II. THE REJECTION OF THESE WITNESSES. "And I will give unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy, clothed in sackcloth." (*G. Rogers.*)

The continuous witness :—The Lord calls forth His faithful witnesses, and makes promise that their voice and testimony shall not be silenced, even though the holy city be trodden underfoot. Mark—I. THE UNFAILING TESTIMONY. Throughout the entire period during which the usurping worldly power shall oppress and tread down the adherents to the truth, the voice of testimony is heard. It cannot be silenced. Forty and two months is the holy city trodden underfoot; a thousand two hundred and three score days do the witnesses prophesy. Not any particular two; but the confirmatory two. The number may be minished; but the voice is clear. One herald is sufficient to make a proclamation. II. THE PAINFULNESS OF WITNESSING AGAINST EVIL AND THREATENING JUDGMENT IS BUT TOO OBVIOUS. The witnesses prophesy, "clothed in sackcloth." So must all who stand in opposition to evil find the painful bitterness of their sad duty. III. THE DIVINE DEFENCE OF THE WITNESSES. "If any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth." The Lord defends His witnesses; His anointed must not be touched. The word of their mouth is itself a penetrating sword of flame; nor can the adversaries of truth escape those external judgments which fire always represents, and which the God of truth uses for the punishment of evildoers. This is further seen in—IV. THEIR PUNITIVE POWER. But it is of a nature correspondent to the entire character of the gospel. "They shut up heaven." Sad indeed is it for them who stay the holy work of the heavenly witnesses. For if their work be hindered it is as the shutting up of the heavens—no spiritual rain, no teaching. The world is the sufferer. The loss is unspeakable. By the removal of the earth-preserving salt—the Word—a plague is brought upon the earth. Alas! though the testimony is continuous through all the time of the worldly oppression, yet the witnesses are finally slain! Here the vision may be for the comfort of the

witnesses to the truth themselves. And we reflect—V. UPON THEIR TEMPORARY DESTRUCTION AND FINAL TRIUMPH. They are slain, and so far the world triumphs. So it did with the one faithful and true Witness. Or we may see here a temporary triumph of the evil worldly spirit, and the final supremacy of the truth. Probably the former. But in either case the faithful witnesses to the truth are assured in this, as in many other ways, of the final reward to their fidelity and the final triumph over them who make them their foes. (*R. Green.*) *The two witnesses, their testimony* :—I. WHY THE SAINTS AND PEOPLE OF GOD ARE CALLED WITNESSES. Because it is their work and business to bear witness to the truths and ways of Christ, in opposition to the ways of antichrist. This is the work that we are born for : For this cause, saith Christ, was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth. This is the work of our generation, witness-bearing to the truths of Christ in opposition to the ways of antichrist, in anti-christian times. You will say, What shall I do that I may be found faithful in this witness-bearing ; what shall I do that I may witness a good confession in these days of ours ? Something by way of rule. Be sure that your testimonies do agree. Though there be a hundred witnesses about a business, if their witness does not agree it will be of little worth. And now so it is, Christ's witnesses this day are divided into many opinions and persuasions, but they may agree in the main for Christ, they may all agree in opposition unto antichrist. If then you would have your witness valid and good, labour, you that are the witnesses, for unity in your testimony. Again, if you would witness a good confession in these days of ours, then you must be willing to own the truth of Christ, to own it whensoever you are called thereunto. It is said, our Saviour Christ He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate. Pray what kind of witness was it ? Was it any long confession, or large ? No ; but the manner of it was this : when they called Him before them to give an account of any fact, He left them to prove it. When they called Him to give an account of the doctrine that He held, "Art thou the King of the Jews" ? then He owned it. He left them to prove the fact, and He owned the truth ; so should we do. If you would witness a good confession in these days of ours, then you must be willing also for to suffer for the truth of Christ. Those that cannot suffer for the truth of Christ and run the hazard of a suffering, they cannot bear their witness fully. See how they go together in chap. xiii. 10. If you would witness a good confession, then take heed that when you have borne your testimony you do nothing that may revoke the same, either directly or by consequence. Thus by way of rule. And now by way of means. If you would be faithful in bearing your testimony, in bearing witness to the truths of Christ in opposition to the ways of antichrist, observe what the root is that a good confession grows upon, and labour for to strengthen that. Now what is the root that a good confession grows upon, but faith working by love ? Labour in the work of self-denial, and use yourself now to deny yourself. In the next place, take heed that you be not scared too much with the scarecrows of the times, but go to God for boldness, that you may be emboldened with the boldness of the Holy Ghost. II. BUT THEN WHAT ARE THESE WITNESSES MORE EXPRESSLY IN REGARD OF THEIR NUMBER, AND IN REGARD OF THEIR QUALITY ? In regard of their number they are two : "And I will give power unto My 'two' witnesses." Two is but a few, and yet it is enough to bear witness, for "out of the mouths of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." Two, a few, and yet enough. The note is this : Christ will always have enough to bear witness to His truth in the darkest times. But then as for their qualification. For their quality : "These are the two olive trees," at ver. 4. If you look into Zechariah, from whence this is taken, you will find the two olive trees are the godly magistrates and ministers, by whose assistance the golden oil is emptied into the candlesticks and lamps. But what are the two candlesticks ? Our Saviour tells you that "the seven golden candlesticks are the seven Churches." They were seven ; now in anti-christian times reduced to a lesser company, two candlesticks. Though, as I said before. Christ will lose none in the latter times, yet in anti-christian times reduced unto two. These are the two candlesticks. Christ tells you the candlesticks are the Churches ; so then put this together. Would you know what these two olive trees are, and the two candlesticks ? They are the godly magistrate and godly minister in conjunction with the saints of God and Churches of Christ. Here we may see who those are that are fit to bear witness of Christ in anti-christian times, to bear their testimony. They are to be a fruitful, profitable people, and a lightsome people, that can hold forth light unto others in some measure. III. IN SACKCLOTH ;

WHAT IS THAT? If you ask what this sackcloth means, it represents the sad and afflicted condition that the saints and people of God shall be in in anti-christian times. Is it not a sad thing for the saints to be persecuted to the very gates of Zion? And if Christ's witnesses shall be in sackcloth 1,260 years, will not you be contented to be in sackcloth three or four years?

IV. PROPHECY—WHAT IS THAT, AND HOW DID IT COME TO PASS THAT THEY SHALL PROPHECY IN THE TIME OF THEIR SACKCLOTH? Prophecy—what is that? Why prophesying is sometimes taken in Scripture for the revelation of the mind of God, whereby a man doth foretell things to come. Prophecy is taken for a declaring and making known of the mind and will of God. For, I pray, do but mark, this their prophesying and witness-bearing seems to be all one. "I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy in sackcloth." I will give power to them; they shall have their orders to preach from Myself; they shall have power from Me to preach, and to prophesy, and to bear their testimony.

V. BUT THEN WHAT IS THE DEFENCE AND GUARD THAT THESE WITNESSES HAVE, WHEREBY THEY ARE GUARDED AND DEFENDED IN THEIR PROPHESYING? The text saith, "If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies." What then is this fire that proceeds out of the mouth of the witnesses but the devouring judgments of God, whereby the enemies of God's people are destroyed by the prayers and threatenings of the people of God that come out of their mouth.

VI. WHAT ARE THE GREAT THINGS THAT THESE WITNESSES WILL DO IN THE END OF THE DAYS OF THEIR PROPHESYING AND OF THEIR SACKCLOTH? "These have power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." (*W. Bridge, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. The beast . . . shall make war.—*Against the beast*.—I. Among the foes which attack the Church of the Lord, either alternately or in solid phalanx, the present age is exposed particularly to one—the Beast, which sometimes arms himself with demoniac force, and again adorns himself with demoniac wisdom, but who nevertheless is, and always remains, a beast, combining in himself antagonism to God and humanity. Keeping these things in view, let us consider the signs of the times. Behold in modern heathenism man making himself an ape, and, even through the midst of baptized Christianity, the doctrine noised abroad that human history does not emanate from God, in no sense has its source in God; that, in fact, in the sense of a conflict for moral freedom, there can be no history of any kind, not to mention the possibility of a sacred history. Nothing is left but natural history, and that includes only three pages: following the title, under which the name of the author is wanting, there stands on the first legible page an animal; on the second, a man; on the third, death. Ancient heathenism was only a departure from universal revelation by means of nature and conscience; but modern paganism is apostasy from the perfect revelation of God in His Son. This is heathenism more mischievous, more difficult of cure! Hold fast, O man, to what thou hast, and what thou art in moral conviction, in order that no animalised wisdom, and no false prophet, rob you of the crown of your personality, which descended to you from God, and flashes back to God. Ye human souls, a brute has no power to elevate nor to degrade itself; that is why it is a brute and no more than nature; man, however, designed for God's child and Christ's co-labourer, must, if he is determined not to follow his calling, fall deep and ever deeper, until he sinks beneath the brute. There certainly never has been a period when the word "humanity" has been so much preached and praised as in ours; but a figure of speech is not yet a fact. Christianity, in truth, has so little conflict with the rights and duties indicated by that word "humanity," that it, the rather, was first to make the word a truth. "Behold the Man!" through Him by whom a new order of things arose, so that there is no longer bond nor free, male nor female, Greek nor Scythian, but all are one in Christ Jesus, one redeemed, regenerated, baptized humanity. In order to be humane, humanity has need of the Son of Man, who is the Son of God. When, in the preceding century, France was inscribing the word "humanity" on all her banners, and always with new embellishment, she began with dethroning God, and ended by murdering her king. The guillotine—that was her fraternity! II. It is time that we leave off boasting, and awake and lay hand on our weapons, and startle the beast back to his dismal hole. The Scripture indicates three weapons to be used in the conflict against the beast, when it exclaims: "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." From these words we derive strictness of discipline, the simplicity of the cross, the power of prayer. (*R. Kögel, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. Where also our Lord was crucified.—*The Cross of the Lord Jesus* :—This passage strikingly identifies the Master and the servants—our Lord and His witnesses. They were to suffer as He suffered and where He suffered : one with Him in life and death, in shame and glory ; one with Him on the Cross, in the grave, in resurrection, in ascension, and on the throne. “Where also our Lord was crucified.” It is the last reference to the Cross of Christ in the Bible, and corresponds well with that frequent expression in the Revelation, “the Lamb slain” ; carrying us back to “the seed of the woman” and “the bruised heel.” 1. It was the place of guilt and condemnation (Matt. xxvii. 22, 26, 28). 2. It was the place of shame (Heb. xii. 2). 3. It was the place of weakness (2 Cor. xiii. 4). 4. It was the place of pain (Heb. xiii. 12). 5. The place of the curse (Gal. iii. 13). 6. The place of rejection (John xix. 6). 7. The place of hatred (Matt. xxvii. 25). 8. The place of death (Matt. xx. 18, 19). (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Good things found in the Cross* :—This Cross, where so many evil things meet, is the place where all good things are to be found. God gathered all the evil to that spot, that He might utterly make away with it, through Him who took all the evil on Himself, that He might bring out of it only good. 1. It is the place of propitiation (Lev. xvi. 15 ; Rom. iii. 25). The altar was there for the burnt-offering. The place without the gate for the sin-offering was there. 2. It is the meeting-place (Exod. xxix. 42). It is the place where we meet with God, and God meets with us in friendship, and love, and joy. It is the place where the Father meets the prodigal and embraces him. 3. It is the place of love. God’s love is there, shining in its full brightness, unhindered and undimmed. 4. It is the place of acceptance. Here we become “accepted in the Beloved.” Here the exchange takes place between the perfect and the imperfect. Believing in the perfect One, we become “complete in Him.” (*Ibid.*) *What the Cross accomplished* :—The Cross accomplished such things as the following :—1. It removed the wall of partition (Col. ii. 14). 2. It made peace (Col. i. 20). 3. It has secured oneness (Eph. ii. 15, 16). 4. It has brought life (2 Cor. xiii. 4). 5. It contains power (1 Cor. i. 18, 23). 6. It is the focus or centre of all wisdom (1 Cor. i. 24). 7. It crucifies the world (Gal. vi. 14). 8. It furnishes a theme for glorying (Gal. vi. 14). 9. It is the model and test of service (Mark viii. 34 ; Luke ix. 23). 10. It is the badge of discipleship (Luke xiv. 27). 11. It is God’s way of salvation (Acts x. 39–43). 12. It is the measure of Christ’s endurance and obedience (Phil. ii. 8). 13. It is the pledge and standard of Divine love (Rom. v. 8). 14. It is the revelation of God’s character (1 John iv. 10). 15. It is God’s lamp of light. 16. It is the universal magnet (John xii. 32). 17. It is the universal balm and medicine. 18. It is man’s estimate of sin. 19. It is God’s verdict against sin, and His estimate of it (Rom. viii. 3). 20. It is man’s estimate of the Son of God. 21. It is God’s interpretation of law and its penalties. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. A great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither.—*The voice from heaven* :—I. We shall regard it, first, as a SUMMONS SENT AT THE APPOINTED HOUR TO EVERY SAINT. When the time shall come, fixed by irreversible decree, there shall be heard “a great voice from heaven” to every believer in Christ, saying, “Come up hither.” 1. This should be to us—each one of us, if we be in Christ—the subject of very joyful anticipation. To some Christians it will be not only joyful in anticipation, but it will be intensely delightful when it arrives. 2. To change the note a moment ; while this should be the subject of joyous anticipation, it should also be the object of patient waiting. God knows best when it is time for us to be bidden to “Come up hither.” We must not wish to antedate the period of our departure. I would not wish to die while there is more work to do or more souls to win. 3. As this “Come up hither” should excite joyous anticipation, tempered by patient waiting, so it should always be to us a matter of absolute certainty as to its ultimate reception. I can understand a man being in doubt about his interest in Christ, but I cannot understand a man’s resting content to be in these doubts. 4. I think very often, besides joyfully anticipating, patiently waiting, and being confidently assured of it, the Christian should delightfully contemplate it. II. We will take the text this time, not as a summons to depart, but as a WHISPER FROM THE SKIES TO THE BELIEVER’S HEART. The Father seems to say this to every adopted child. Nor will your Father and my Father ever be content till every one of His children shall be in the many mansions above. And Jesus whispers this in your ear. “I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” Jesus beckons thee to the skies, believer. Lay

not fast hold upon the things of earth. III. These words may be used as A LOVING INVITATION TO UNCONVERTED PERSONS. There are many spirit voices which cry to them, "Come up hither; come up to heaven." 1. God our Father calls thee. Sinner, thou hast many troubles of late; business goes amiss. Dost thou not know, sinner, this is thy Father saying, "Come up hither"? Thy portion is not here; seek thou another and a better land. 2. But more, the Lord Jesus Christ has also beckoned to you to come. Thou hast heard that He made a way to heaven. Is not a road an invitation to a traveller to walk therein? 3. The Spirit of God strives with thee and cries, "Come up hither." The Spirit of God wrote this book; and wherefore was this book written? Hear the words of Scripture, "These are written that ye might believe," &c. 4. Moreover, does not thy conscience say the same? 5. And, last of all, the spirit of your friends departed cry from heaven to you to-night—that voice which I would you could hear, "Come up hither." I adjure you, ye sons of saints in glory; I adjure you, daughter of immortal mothers; despise not now the voice of those who speak from heaven to you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Voices from heaven:—And we, too, hear voices from heaven, saying unto us, "Come up hither." Did we not, how grovelling our desires, our pursuits, our very natures would be! 1. There is, first, a voice even from the lower and material heaven, calling on our souls, and urging them to ascend. The stars of the firmament, and the sun, and the moon, speak as well as shine. They "utter forth a glorious voice"; a voice which not only declares the glory of God, but exhorts the spirit of man. Come up hither! Come up into the vast domains of space, and count our numbers, and compute our size, and bathe in our brightness, and learn what we can tell you of height and of depth, of splendour and of power. Stay not always below. Breathe not always in mist and vapours. Regard not earth so exclusively and so long, as to rest in the conclusion that earth is all. 2. We do not stop, however, but only begin with these works, all bright and eloquent as they are. They introduce us to Him who made them; to Him from whose fountain they draw their light, and of whose voice their own is but an echo. God delegates not to His creatures, but reserves as His own right, the highest converse with His likeness, the human soul. He is the Father of spirits, and He will speak Himself to His children. And from the heaven where He dwelleth He says to them, Come up hither. Come up into the spiritual dwelling-place of your Creator, and birthplace of your own souls. Remain not so constantly in your temporal residence, as to forget the way to that abode where My children are to live for ever. Come up hither by faith now, that hereafter you may come in by sight. Come up by hope, that when hope shall disappear, it may be swallowed up in fruition. Come up by charity and good works done in the body, that when your bodies are resolved into dust, your souls may be prepared for that happy and holy kingdom into which sin and impurity cannot enter. Come up hither by the exercises of piety and the strength of Divine love. Come, and see My face, and be to Me as sons. 3. But there is another to whom we are dear, even His own Son, who dwells with His Father; and He also calls us from the same heaven, saying unto us, Come up hither! Here are the mansions which I have been preparing for My disciples. Cause not My labour for you to be vain. I earned My reward, that ye might share it with Me. I would not lose one soul that I once bled to redeem. Come up hither. There is room for you, and for all. 4. And now we hear other great voices from heaven, saying unto us, Come up hither! They are the voices of "the glorious company of the apostles," "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," "the noble army of martyrs," the innumerable multitude of saints and sealed servants of God, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. Come up hither! they cry, and witness our joys, and be encouraged by our success. 5. There are few to whom I am speaking who do not hear other voices yet, which, though not more animating than the last, are, by the provision of God, nearer to the listening ear, and dearer to the soul. There are few who do not number in their families those whose places are vacant at the table and the hearth, but who are not reckoned as lost but only gone before. And when the business of daily life is for a while suspended, and its cares are put to rest—nay, often in the midst of the world's unheeded tumult—their voices float down clearly and distinctly from heaven, and say to their own, Come up hither! Our infirmities are relieved; our strength is renewed; our fears and doubts are flown away; our sins are forgiven. Harken to us, and be comforted! Come to us, when your journey is done! (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*)

The great voice from heaven:—No argument is needed to show that the word "up" is used in a figurative and not in a literal sense. What

heaven is we do not know. The truth is that between physical and moral relations there is often a close analogy. The physical world in which we live is the type of the world to which we are going; the conditions of being, the relations of matter in which we are practised here—motion, rest, distance, nearness, weight, buoyancy, power, resistance, birth, life, growth, death—all these are physical ideas; yet we cannot talk about spiritual or heavenly things without employing these terms; and they were meant to be used by us in this way. Of course the essential excellence of heaven consists in the moral purity and perfection of which it is the home. And between moral purity and perfection and physical elevation there seems to be a constant and, perhaps, a necessary relation. Perhaps the human mind is so constituted that it will associate these ideas. The fact is worth noting, because we are not always aware that when we seem to be speaking in the soberest prose we are often using words poetically. We talk of the higher life, meaning, of course, the purer and better life; we describe one whom we know as possessing a lofty spirit, as governed by an elevated purpose, as having a high standard of conduct. The analogy between physical height and moral excellence is most clear and vivid. We go down into cellars and dungeons, into caverns and morasses, into sloughs and pitfalls, into floods and depths of ocean. A great part of our physical discomforts and dangers are encountered in going down. We go up to solid footing, to pure air, to wide prospects; many of our more pleasurable sensations are the result of ascending. The voice from heaven which says, "Come up hither," means to us a great deal. It means, Come up out of the fens and quagmires, out of the cellars and the dungeons, out of the miasma and the darkness—up to the heights where the sun always shines, where the air is always pure and sweet, where the eye sweeps a wide horizon that girdles fertile plains and shining lakes and winding rivers and glorious summits. "It is only a figure, then," somebody may say. That is as if one should stoop to pick up a pebble and should exclaim, as he held it in his hand, "Only a diamond!" How much more rich and precious is the figure than any mere literalism could be! We conceive of heaven rightly both as a state of being and as a place of residence. Holding, then, both these conceptions of heaven in our thought, let us listen to the great voice out of heaven saying unto us, "Come up hither!" Heaven as a state is not beyond the reach of those who dwell upon the earth. Heaven came down to earth when Christ came. It had always been coming, indeed; but there was more of it here when He came than ever before. The announcement of the Saviour's coming by the Forerunner—what was it? "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." There is a life that springs from the earth and that clings to the earth; a life whose central motive is appetite or passion, or some form of selfishness a little more refined; a life that is ruled by material ideas and forces; a life whose maxims and methods are all earthly and sordid. There is another life that has its inspiration in heaven, and that lifts us up toward heaven; a life whose central motive is love; whose source is the indwelling of God's spirit in the soul; a life that enthrones the nobler faculties and makes the grosser nature serve the higher; that holds the appetites in check, and subordinates material things to spiritual; a life whose joy is found in giving rather than in getting. These two realms of experience—the upper and the lower—lie close together, and both of them invite us by motives of their own. There is that in us which responds to the solicitations of the realm of sense, and there is that in us which answers to the call from the spiritual realm. Unhappily many of us, I fear, spend most of our days down below. Our affections are set on things on the earth, rather than on the things above. Now and then we make an excursion into the heavenly realm, but we do not stay there long. (*W. Gladden, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
*—The judgments of God:—*1. The judgments of God's mouth, and the judgments of God's hand—the word and the work of God—the manifestation of His truth by verbal announcement, and the manifestation of His truth by providential dispensation, are alike efficacious, through the Divine blessing, to the conversion of the souls of men. "The remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." 2. The terrible judgments of the Almighty, overwhelming the wicked with alarm and awe, are the last means—where the other have been despised and unavailing—by which infinite mercy operates for the salvation of the souls of men (*Prov. xxix. 1*). 3. These means are also, historically or prophetically, the last means by which shall be accomplished that national regeneration which shall precede and usher in the glory of the millennial era, which is thus described by revelation (*chap. xi. 15*).

4. "Wars and rumours of wars," "and great earthquakes in divers places, and famines, and pestilence, and fearful sights and great signs from heaven," shall be the principal instrumentalities of judgment by which the enemies of God and His Church shall be dealt with in these predicted "days of vengeance." 5. The present condition of Christendom—its Churches and its nations—viewed in the light of prophetic intimation, reveals that "monitory pulse-like beating" which is symptomatic of the approaching end. 6. In the meantime, let the Church of Christ, by the enterprise of faith and the devotion of worship anticipate the anthem of her triumph when, commingling her own gladness with the hymnal joys of the world's jubilee, she shall sing (chap. xi. 17). (*Thos. Easton.*)

Ver. 15. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.—*Ave, Imperator* :—This text is generally quoted in a missionary connection, and associated with the conversion of the heathen. But it is of much wider scope than that. There are plenty of Christians that want converting, plenty of Churches that want Christianising. The progress of all life in our planet has been a progress from the animal upward to the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual; from mere brute force to the dominion of thought and reason. Ages back mere bigness of mass seemed to count for everything. The so-called "antediluvian" monsters were rampant. As life developed mere bigness became of less and less account, and brain became of more account. Those who can influence mind are the true monarchs of creation. This is the realm in which Christ's supreme triumphs are to take place. Christ will fascinate and possess the mind of the world, and the mind will rule all the rest. "Strong beliefs win strong men, and then make them stronger." The masculine but humane morality of Jesus Christ must more and more commend itself to the thinking and influential portion of society. Ideas and institutions which have been long prevalent go down before a superior idea. So shall it be with many world-ideas in presence of the truth of Christ. Many institutions have lived and done their work. They have served their day and generation, but now they have waxed old, and are ready to decay and vanish away in the presence of a nobler ideal. Still, we are not to disparage the old because the new has come. The present forms of animal life are far superior in development and attainment to those whose remains are found in the tertiary rocks. But the forms of to-day could not have existed without the forms that went before. Those very things which Christ's law and spirit will supplant have been important factors in human progress. When the Apocalyptic dream of the New Jerusalem, the Christian state, the city of God, finally and triumphantly established upon earth, shall find complete fulfilment, it will be characterised by a fuller embodiment of the law of Christ in every sphere of human relationship and conduct. For instance, the kingdom of Art shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. It has become so to a great extent. All the noblest paintings, all the grandest buildings in the world during the Christian era, have been the product of the Christian imagination. Certainly the sublimest music owns this inspiration. We need not fear the complete annexation of this kingdom, because the genius of the true Christianity is hopeful and happy. The kingdom of Literature would, in like manner, come under the dominance of Christian ideas. It is hard to say at present whether this tremendous engine for good or evil works most good or evil. What a blessed thing it will be when the domain of literature becomes the domain of Christ; when nothing will be written or read the tendency of which is not to the true elevation and edification of the human mind; when editors shall all be men of conscience, and the venal pen shall be as much an archaeological curiosity as the stone hatchet; when we shall be able to take up any book and feel that it will be safe for our children to read; when we can open even the latest novel from Paris with the confidence that none of our finer sensibilities will be shocked, and that an atmosphere will not be introduced into the home whose poisonous vapours we should shudder to think that our young people will breathe. The kingdom of Commerce, too, shall one day fall under the rule of Christ. That will be indeed a blessed day when men can trust one another, and when all shall be worthy of that trust; when another man's property shall be as sacred in our eyes as our own; when public funds shall be administered with the same scrupulous integrity with which our own are dispensed. The realm of Amusements, too, shall come under the same rule. The prophecy will find its fulfilment not in the expression of any particular forms of recreation, but in the Christianising of them all. And will it not be a grand day when the kingdom of Politics shall be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ? When

debates shall be purged from the pettiness of personality and the rancour of recrimination; when offices shall be filled with the sole aim that the commonwealth shall receive the services of its most capable citizens; and when the statesman's ruling principle shall be not to catch votes, but to redress wrongs and establish righteousness. And then may we not hope that even the Church itself in that happy day shall come under the dominion of the law of Christ? No longer to be the collection of ecclesiastical antiquities, the museum of theological curiosities, the arena of strife and debate that it is to-day, but the abode of ideal men and women, the home of all the sweet and pure Christian virtues. Then Christians shall no longer "bite and devour one another"; "giving the enemy occasion to blaspheme." Their energies shall be converted into light, and not into heat, and men will be willing to rejoice in that light. But how shall those great results, of which we have spoken in other spheres, be achieved unless the Church be first true to herself? It is through her that these beneficent impulses upon society must come. We must begin by being ideal Christians if the world is to become an ideal world. (*J. Halsey.*) *The glory awaiting the Church on earth:—I. THE PROBABLE CONDITION OF THE WORLD IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PREDICTION.* It will be characterised by—1. The universal dissemination of Christian knowledge. 2. The general prevalence of religious life. 3. The increase and glory of the Christian Church. 4. The diffusion of happiness throughout the world. Christianity is the parent of morality, industry, patriotism, public spirit. II. *THE PROBABLE MEANS BY WHICH THIS GREAT EVENT WILL BE PRODUCED.* 1. The preaching of the gospel. 2. The active zeal of Christians. 3. The operations of Divine providence. 4. The effusion of the Holy Spirit. III. *THE DUTIES WHICH ARISE IN ANTICIPATING THIS GREAT CONSUMMATION.* 1. To seek the possession of personal religion. 2. To render all assistance to accelerate the advent of this glorious period. 3. To unite in prayer for the accomplishment of this prediction. (*Homilist.*) *The kingdom of God:—*We can imagine, I suppose, that when the Revelation of St. John the Divine was taken to the different Christian Churches, in the upper chambers where they were accustomed to meet together, or in the secret places where they gathered for fear of persecution, after they had read these glowing pages, they must have parted with new feelings of hope in their hearts. They would expect that a time would come speedily when the persecutions would be memories of the past, and the kingdom would be set up, of which they had been reading in such vivid colours. Yet the day passed by, and the Roman power remained, and the Temple, sacred to Diana at Ephesus, was as stable as ever. It happened then as it has happened to many a one since. So it must have been with many of those of the ancient Church, when, all eager and expectant, they found the vision was sealed for the time; they must go their way and tarry until the time should come when the promise would be fulfilled. We can scarcely be surprised at finding that they looked for a very literal fulfilment in the shape of a kingdom which should, by the exercise of power, bear down all opposition. They were told of a great king who went forth "conquering and to conquer." The tradition of the old Jewish Church was of a people going forth as the Lord's messengers to crush down all the Lord's enemies. Again, the majority of Christian people, when they found that the promise could not be realised in that way, looked for something totally different. The promise seemed impossible of literal fulfilment. The kingdom of God became totally distinct from the kingdom of the world. It was something which could only be reached when this world was over. When persecution broke out, when the people were dragged to prison, men felt that the kingdom of God was not of this world, but of that which is to come. And so, little by little, people had that expectation for the realisation of this promise. Does the Christian Church of to-day have the same expectation? Is there any possibility of the realisation of this promise? I would suggest that the realisation is to come through our changed ideas about the kingdom of God; that the kingdom of God does not mean power victorious, but that it means love victorious; that the kingdom of God means what St. Paul does when he writes, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." What I want to leave in your minds is the conviction that the crown of thorns is the crown of glory; that the Cross is the throne on which Christ is exalted. What do these two things mean—the crown of thorns and the cross of shame? They mean the extremest manifestation of infinite love. Christ has said that love is greater than hate; love is greater than infamy. And that is the only principle on which "the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." The Christian Church is

slowly abandoning the idea of conquering by mere power. The Christian Church is slowly losing the idea of the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ in the persons of those who pass away beyond this world, and become the subjects of a kingdom which has nothing to do with this world. His kingdom shall come on this earth by the individual members copying the example of Jesus Christ, and believing in the revelation of that love which overcame sin; so that the people who live upon this earth shall be willing subjects of Divine love, and living in perfect love to their fellow-men. (*Bp. Courtney.*) *Missionary prospects*:—It is related of Hannibal that, when he had led his men to one of the higher ridges of the Alps, they began to murmur, and requested that they should be reconducted to their native country. Standing on an eminence and waving his hand, the intrepid Carthaginian General directed their attention to the plains of Piedmont below. "Behold," said he, "these fruitful vineyards and luxuriant fields. A few more struggles, and they are all your own." These were inspiring words, and they had the desired effect. May we not apply them to the subject of missions, and say, Behold, from the mount of promise, the nations of the earth at the feet of the Church's exalted Head! A few more struggles on the part of His followers, and voices shall be heard, not in heaven only, but from the innumerable and widely scattered tongues of earth, giving utterance to the joyous announcement, "The kingdoms of this world are become," &c. *The kingdom of heaven and its progress*:—You might as well stand on the banks of the Mississippi and be afraid it was going to run up stream as to suppose that the current of Christendom can run more than one way. What would you think of a man who should stand moonstruck over an eddy, and because that didn't go right forward, declare that the whole flood had got out of its course? So in the stream of time. The things that appear in our day all have bearing on the coming triumph of the gospel and the reign of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Jesus will conquer the world*:—Yonder in the cathedral at Vienna the Emperor Frederick is represented, standing with arm uplifted, and at the tip of his extended fingers are the five vowels, A, E, I, O, U, which, being interpreted, means, "Austria est imperare obi universo"—"Austria will conquer the world." Another and a grander figure meets the gaze of every Christian of to-day, no matter where his standpoint, and the inscription thereon is in letters of fire: "Jesus est imperare obi universo"—"Jesus will conquer the world." (*C. W. Boot.*)

Vers. 16-19.—The four-and-twenty elders . . . fell upon their faces and worshipped God.—The heavenly life:—I. IT IS A LIFE OF WORSHIP. 1. The persons who are worshipping are described as twenty-four elders. They are the Universal Church, the blessed of the old covenant and of the new; and yet, as persons and representatives, are portrayed as leaders of the heavenly worship. 2. Their dignity. They are "before God," i.e., in His immediate presence, and sit upon thrones. They are said also to have crowns (*chap. iv. 10*). This is a picture in which vision, repose, kingly power, and victory each has a place. 3. Their worship. Observe, it is an act—they "fell upon their faces and worshipped God." Sitting upon thrones, contemplating God, was their habitual condition; but worship was the active expression of their sense of the Divine majesty. They offer Him inward and outward adoration. II. IT IS A LIFE OF THANKSGIVING. 1. This arises from the clear realisation of their indebtedness to God for all. Gratitude is apt to be chilled by the sorrows, the sufferings, and the uncertainties of this present life. When it exists in the soul it has to struggle with life's burden, and its expression is like the transient rays of light which pierce the cloud that darkens the landscape. But the song of the redeemed is called forth by the sight of the Giver, and the dark problems of earth are solved in the light of heaven (*John xiii. 7*). 2. It arises from the possession of "the gift of glory." Grace is more precious than all the gifts of nature; but glory is greater than grace, as the flower is more than the bud. The consciousness of having "attained to the true end of their being elicits from the worshippers the anthem of thanksgiving with a fulness and a sweetness in the heavenly Jerusalem with which the songs by the waters of Babylon could never compare. 3. It arises from a deeper sense of unworthiness than can ever be felt on earth. What was the casting of their crowns before the feet of the Most High but a protestation that their excellence and their victories were due to the grace which He had vouchsafed to them? 4. It was a corporate oblation of thanksgiving—"We give," &c. Each has his own joy, and each can enter into the joy of all. III. WHAT DIVINE PERFECTION DID THEY HYMN? THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

1. This perfection belongs to God alone. He alone is without beginning. This is the root-distinction between Creator and creature. He is, in the language of Daniel, "the Ancient of days" (Dan. vii. 22). He is from Himself; with Him is "the well of life." None other is self-derived. He alone possesses His life without succession, unchangeably (*tota simul*). 2. Every creature has a beginning. "The creature is from that," says St. Augustine, "which is as yet not." As being is a base of all gifts, so creation is at the root of all worship. The realisation of God as the Beginning and End of our being is essential for worship. The elders grasped the difference between Creator and created. They offered Him, their God, "glory, and honour, and praise." Why? "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created." Here every one and everything we see is created and transient; the line between eternal and temporal is clearly marked where the Eternal makes Himself known and seen. IV. LESSONS.

1. The importance of worship as a preparation for the heavenly life. 2. The spirit of thanksgiving should enter more fully into our religion, which is sometimes lacking in brightness, trust, and unselfishness. 3. The contemplation of the eternity of God, "Thou art from everlasting," produces many fruits. There is a certain delight in the contemplation, as in regarding some vast and magnificent object, as the heavens or the sea. Then the thought of an eternity in the future, of the endlessness of human life, must stir within us hopes and fears—"hope of glory," and fear of missing it. Such a conception will always create in us a sense of the littleness of things present, in comparison with things eternal. (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*) We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come.—*The omnipotence of God*.:—IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF ALL CREATURES. It is God alone who can create. Man, in the exercise of his wisdom and ingenuity, may indeed form and invent many things, but he must have the materials to work with: when God formed the world He found no materials to work with—He created the materials Himself. He called them into being with His irresistible voice: and when He surveyed the various works of His hands, we are told, they all met with His full approval: "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." All the works of God are finished works; they will bear, as they invite, the closest and most minute inspection; and unlike the works of man, when most examined they will be the most admired. We may notice also the power of God in the greatness of some of His works, and in the smallness of others. The earth which we inhabit is said to be eight thousand miles in diameter, but what is this when compared with the body of the sun, which gives us light day after day, and which is said to be a million of times larger than the earth we inhabit, and ninety millions of miles distant from it. The smallness again of many creatures is equally surprising, as is the greatness of others. II. IN THE PRESERVATION AND GOVERNMENT OF HIS CREATURES. "He upholdeth all things by the word of His power." The planets revolve in their appointed circuits with the most unerring and minute exactness. The various seasons succeed each other in their regular and appointed order. The great and wide sea also, whose billows roar and threaten to overwhelm the earth, is kept by the power of its Maker within its proper and prescribed limits. We may again observe the same Almighty power in making such constant and abundant provision for the vast family of the universe. All the innumerable tribes of beings which inhabit the earth, the air, and the water, "these all wait upon God." The moral government of God is still more wonderful to contemplate. III. IN THE WORK OF OUR REDEMPTION BY CHRIST JESUS. How manifest was this in the person of our Divine Redeemer Himself! And when we come to consider the first planting of our holy religion in the world, by means so feeble and so unlikely to all human appearance, and notwithstanding obstacles so great, we shall see with what propriety the gospel is spoken of as "the power of God unto salvation." The gospel also is intended to produce a great inward change. The corruption of our nature is such as to render this change absolutely needful; and it is a change so considerable and complete, that it is called in Scripture a "new creation"; this, of course, can only be effected by the power of God. And the apostle, as if wanting language to express the greatness of this power, says, "and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." One exertion more of the Divine power let us dwell on. When Moses beheld a bush on fire, and yet not consumed, he turned aside to behold it with admiration. In that burning bush

he beheld the emblem of Israel afflicted in Egypt, yet not destroyed; and may we not also perceive in it an emblem of the true Christian, "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"? And what but the power of God is sufficient for this purpose? Lessons: 1. That God should be held in reverence and adored. 2. Let this Almighty God be also feared. 3. Blessed are they who put their trust in Him. (*J. L. F. Russell, M.A.*) *The omnipotence of God*:—Every attribute of God is a proper and useful object of our consideration, as being apt to remind us of our duty, and excite us to the practice of it, for which purposes this of omnipotence, mentioned in the text, is of much avail, and deserves serious consideration. 1. God is *παντοκράτωρ*, as having a just right and authority over all thing, being naturally the sovereign Lord and Emperor of the world. 1. He is also such in regard to His infinite power, as that word may signify omnipotent. 3. He is also so, because He doth actually exercise all dominion, and continually exert His power, according to His good pleasure; "for the Lord hath prepared His throne in heaven, and His kingdom ruleth over all," &c. 4. God is *παντοκράτωρ*, as the true proprietary and just possessor of all things; "the heavens," saith the Psalmist, "are Thine; the earth also is Thine," &c. 5. Also as containing and comprehending all things by His immense presence and infinite capacity. "I fill heaven and earth," said God in Jeremiah; and King Solomon in his prayer observes, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee," &c. 6. God is *παντοκράτωρ*, in regard that He sustains and preserves all things (*Nehem. ix. 6; Col. 1. 17*). I. IF GOD BE THE JUST SOVEREIGN OF ALL THINGS, HAVING A RIGHT TO GOVERN THE WORLD, AND ACTUALLY EXERCISING IT, then—1. We see our condition here; that we live not in an anarchy, or in perfect liberty to follow our own will, &c. 2. We understand our duty as subjects and vassals, &c. 3. We may hence discern the heinousness of every sin as committed against the crown and dignity of God. 4. We may learn what reason we have to be content in every condition, since our station is allotted to us by unquestionable right. 5. It is a matter of great consolation to reflect that we and all the world are under such a governor, who is no usurper and tyrant, but a most just, wise, and gracious sovereign. II. THE BELIEF OF GOD'S IMMENSE AND UNCONTROLLABLE POWER IS ALSO OF GREAT IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE ON PRACTICE. 1. It serves to beget in us a due awe and dread of Him. 2. It consequently dissuades and deters us in a high manner from sin, nothing being more reasonable than that advice of the preacher, "contend not with him that is mightier than thou." 3. Whence the consideration of this point may dispose us to weigh well our counsels. 4. It may also serve to depress confidence in ourselves, and in all other things, as to any security they can afford. 5. It may be of special efficacy to quell and mortify in us the vices of pride, arrogance, self-will. 6. Also to breed and nourish faith in God, as to the certain performance of His word and promises, which, be they never so difficult, He is so able to perform. 7. Hence also particularly it may produce and cherish faith in the sufficiency of God's providence, and induce us entirely to rely on it. 8. It affords comfort and encouragement to us in the undertaking and prosecution of honest and prudent enterprises, giving us hope and confidence in their success. III. THAT NOTION OF THE WORD "ALMIGHTY," WHICH IMPLIES GOD'S BEING UNIVERSAL PROPRIETARY AND POSSESSOR OF ALL THINGS, HAS ALSO MANY GOOD USES. We may thence learn—1. That we are not our own, and therefore are obliged to submit with patience to His disposal of us. 2. We ought to be content with that share of accommodations which He allows, since all things are His, and we can claim nothing from Him. 3. To be satisfied when He withdraws that of which He has before afforded us the enjoyment. 4. To be heartily thankful for all we ever have or enjoy. 5. Carefully to manage and employ all which is put into our hands for His interest and service. 6. To be humble and sober, not to be conceited, or to glory in regard to anything we love. IV. THAT SENSE, ACCORDING TO WHICH THE WORD SIGNIFIES GOD'S CONTAINING ALL THINGS BY HIS IMMENSE PRESENCE, IS ALSO OF MOST EXCELLENT USE. We thereby may learn with what care, circumspection, modesty, and integrity we ought always to manage our conversation and behaviour, since we continually think and speak and act in the immediate presence of God, "whose eyes are on the ways of men." Hence also we are prompted to frequent addresses of prayer, thanksgiving, and all kind of adoration. V. THE CONSIDERATION THAT GOD UPHOLDS ALL THINGS, AND CONSEQUENTLY OURSELVES, IN BEING, MAY POWERFULLY DETER US FROM OFFENDING HIM; for put the case that our life and all the comforts of living depended on the bounty and pleasure of any person, should we not be very wary and fearful of offending such an one? (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **The temple of God was opened in heaven.**—*The vision of the heavenly temple*:—I. **THE VISION OF THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE.** “The temple of God was opened in heaven.” 1. A spectacle of surpassing grandeur. Its revealing splendour drinks up the mists of ages, and solves enigmas that have puzzled the wisest. 2. A spectacle of Divine government. Our God and King is enshrined in the heavenly temple; from thence He governs all things in the interest of His Church, contending with and defeating her enemies. The unexplained procedures of His government will soon be made clear. 3. A spectacle of loftiest worship. There is no true worship without thanksgiving and praise. II. **THE SUGGESTIVE DISCLOSURE OF THE HEAVENLY VISION.** There was seen in His temple the ark of the Testament. We regard the ark disclosed in this vision as a symbol of God’s faithfulness. 1. In carrying out the covenant of redemption. He selected the Jews as the nation through which He intended to reveal His saving purposes to the world. The work of atonement was conceived, developed, and carried out in harmony with all the attributes of the Divine character. 2. In rewarding the faithful. Designated in three different grades—ver. 18. (1) His servants, the prophets—men prominently active in His cause. (2) The saints—eminent for piety. (3) Them that fear Thy name, small and great—men of varying degrees of attachment to God. All rewarded according to their works. 3. In taking vengeance on His enemies. These enemies are described in ver. 18 as those who destroy or corrupt the earth. This done by wars and desolations, by abuse of secular and spiritual powers, by evil doctrines, by flagrant sins, which cry for vengeance. All such enemies God will “punish with everlasting destruction.” Lessons: 1. The most imposing revelation in the heavenly temple will be that of God’s faithfulness. 2. The contemplation of that faithfulness, while it stimulates the righteous, may well alarm the wicked. (*G. Barlow.*) **The ark of His testimony.**—*The ark of the covenant* (with Jer. iii. 16):—I. **THE SYMBOL REVERENCED.** This ark was the object of great reverence, and very fitly so, because it symbolised God’s presence. They saw no similitude, for what likeness can there be of Him that filleth all in all? But they knew that God’s excellent glory shone above the mercy-seat, and they thought of the ark in connection with the Lord, as David did when he said, “Thou and the ark of Thy strength.” It was, therefore, a thing greatly to be revered, for God was there. That presence of God meant blessing, for God was with His people in love to them. Moreover, the ark was held in reverence by the Israelites because it was their leader. Marvel not that the men of Judah paid great reverence to this ark when in so many ways it was a token for good to them. What they did to this ark is mentioned in the text. 1. They recognised it as the ark of the covenant of the Lord. They were wont to say, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” They spoke much of it, and prided themselves upon the possession of it. 2. They remembered it, as the text plainly informs us. If they were captives they prayed in the direction in which the ark was situated; wherever they wandered they thought of God and of the coffer which represented His presence. 3. They visited it. On certain holy days they came from Dan and from Beersheba, even from the uttermost ends of their land, in joyful companies, singing and making joyful holiday as they went up to the place where God did dwell between the cherubim. 4. They were accustomed also to speak highly of it, for in the margin of your Bibles you will find, “Neither shall they magnify it any more.” They used to tell to one another what the ark had done; the glory that shone forth from it, the acceptance of the offering whose blood was sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement, and the testimony which was heard from between the cherubic wings. II. **THAT REVERENCE OBLITERATED.** They were to say no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” Yet that fact was to be a blessing. Observe that the words are not spoken as a threatening, but as a gracious promise. Now, this cannot merely mean that they would be without the ark, for they would certainly understand that to be a sign of Divine anger. Neither would the mere absence of the ark fulfil the prophet’s words; for if the ark were gone they would remember it still. If they could not visit it, yet it would come to their minds, and they would speak of it. It was somehow to be a boon to them that they should speak no more of the ark of the covenant, for the text was delivered in the form of a promise. The fact is they were to have done with the symbol because the substance would come. Our Lord Jesus by His coming has put out of His people’s thoughts the material ark of the covenant, because its meaning is fulfilled in Him, and this—1. In the sense of preservation. We think nothing of the ark now, and we think nothing of the tablets of stone; but we do

think everything of Jesus Christ, "who is made of God unto us righteousness"; for He has completely kept the law; for He said, "Thy law is within My heart." It was not within His heart alone, but within all His life; His whole thoughts, words, and acts went to make up a golden chest in which the precious treasure of the perfect law of God should be contained. O come, let us magnify His blessed name! 2. Next, the ark signified propitiation; for over the top of the sacred box which held the two tables of the law was the slab of gold called the mercy-seat, which covered all. We will not talk of that golden covering now, but we will speak of Jesus, our blessed Lord, who covers all. 3. The next word is a very blessed one: and that is, "covenant." I thank God that in Jesus Christ we have a covenant of grace which can never fail, and can never be broken, and in Him we have all that our souls desire: pot of manna and rod of Aaron; covenant provision and covenant rule we find in Him. 4. Fourthly: because this ark was the ark of the covenant of God it was from it that He was accustomed to reveal Himself, and so it is called the "ark of testimony." Jehovah often spoke from off the mercy-seat to His waiting people. We say no more, "the ark of the testimony," but we rejoice that God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, and saw the Father in the Son. 5. This ark also signified enthronement; for the top of the ark was, so to speak, the throne of God. It was "the throne of the heavenly grace." There God reigned and dwelt, that is, typically. We talk no longer of the ark, and of its gold, and of its crown, and of its golden lid, and of the winged cherubs; for the Lord Jesus is infinitely better than these. Oh, our beloved Lord and Master, Thou dost chase away these shadows from our minds, for the very throne of God art Thou! 6. Out of this grows the next idea, that as it was the place of God's enthronement, so it was the door of man's approach. Men never came nearer to God on earth typically than when they stood in the holy place close by the ark. Israel was nearest to God symbolically on that day when the atonement had been made and accepted, and her priest stood before the ark awe-stricken in the presence of God. You and I need not speak of the ark of the covenant, for we have a blessed way of approach. We do not come to Christ once in the year only, but every day in the year, and every hour of the day. He who came but once in the year came tremblingly. The Jews have a tradition that they put a cord about the foot of the high priest, so that if he should die before the ark they might draw out his corpse, such was their servile fear of God. The tradition shows what was the trembling nature of that entrance within the veil: how different from the apostle's words, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace"! We are not afraid of being stricken with death there: we are full of reverence, but we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. There is no approaching God except in Christ; but in Christ our approach to God may be as near as possible. III. THIS REVERENCE TRANSFERRED. 1. First: Let us say that Jesus is our covenant. We are told, "They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord." People must talk, it is natural to them—what else are their tongues for? Let us, then, say concerning Christ that He is the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Come, let us each one say it for himself—"Lord Jesus, I am in covenant with God through Thee. Jesus, thou art my propitiation, by Thee I approach unto the Father." 2. The text takes you a step further, for it says of the original ark, "neither shall it come to mind," or (margin), "neither shall it come upon your heart." Let Christ come upon your heart, and dwell there. Let us not have Christ in the head, but Christ in the heart. Know all you can about Him; but love Him on account of everything you know; for everything we learn about Christ ought to be another argument for affection to Him. 3. And next, if we should ever grow dull or cold at any time, let us take the third step in the text, and let us remember the Lord. If I have not this enjoyment now I will remember it, and struggle till I find my Lord again. O my Lord, I will remember Thee. If I forget Thee, let my heart forget to beat. 4. The next thing is, let us visit Him. We cannot set out on journeys now to go to Jerusalem on foot—little bands of us together; yet let us visit Jesus. Let us continually come to the mercy-seat alone. Who that knows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there? Next, let us come up by twos and threes. You that live at home and seldom get out, could you not every now and then during the day say to your maid, if she is a Christian, or to your sister who lives with you, "Come, let us have a five minutes' visit to the ark of the covenant; let us go to the Lord and speak with Him; maybe He will speak with us"? 5. The last thing is, "neither shall that be done any more"; but the margin has it, "neither shall that be magnified any more." Transfer your

reverence, then, and as you cannot magnify the literal mercy-seat, come and magnify Christ, who is the real mercy-seat. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The ark of His covenant*:—I. THE COVENANT IS ALWAYS NEAR TO GOD. 1. Whatever happens, the covenant stands secure. 2. Whether we see it or not, the covenant is in its place, near to God. 3. The covenant of grace is for ever the same, for—(1) The God who made it changes not. (2) The Christ who is its Surety and Substance changes not. (3) The love which suggested it changes not. (4) The principles on which it is settled change not. (5) The promises contained in it change not; and, best of all—(6) The force and binding power of the covenant change not. II. THE COVENANT IS SEEN OF SAINTS. We see it when—1. By faith we believe in Jesus as our Covenant-head. 2. By instruction we understand the system and plan of grace. 3. By confidence we depend upon the Lord's faithfulness, and the promises which He has made in the covenant. 4. By prayer we plead the covenant. 5. By experience we come to perceive covenant-love running as a silver thread through all the dispensations of providence. 6. By a wonderful retrospect we look back when we arrive in heaven, and see all the dealings of our faithful covenant God. III. THE COVENANT CONTAINS MUCH THAT IS WORTH SEEING. 1. God dwelling among men: as the ark in the tabernacle, in the centre of the camp. 2. God reconciled, and communing with men upon the mercy-seat. 3. The law fulfilled in Christ: the two tables in the ark: 4. The kingdom established and flourishing in Him: Aaron's rod blossomed. 5. The provision made for the wilderness: for in the ark was laid up the golden pot which had manna. The universe united in carrying out covenant purposes, as typified by the cherubim on the mercy-seat. IV. THE COVENANT HAS SOLEMN SURROUNDINGS. 1. The sanctions of Divine power—confirming. 2. The supports of eternal might—accomplishing. 3. The movements of spiritual energy—applying its grace. 4. The terrors of eternal law—overthrowing its adversaries. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VERS. 1, 2. **A great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun.**—*The sign of the woman in heaven*:—Let us consider the scene. There is a woman clothed with the sun, crowned with stars, and having the moon under her feet. A woman has ever been the chief symbol of the Church. The relation between the Lord and the Church is most correctly represented by the relation between a true husband and a faithful wife. The husband is delighted to supply his wife with every comfort; his counsel guides, his strength defends her. So is the Lord to the whole universe, but especially to heaven and the Church. A wife, on the other hand, loves her husband, and him only, as a husband. She trusts in his judgment, she has confidence in his strength and protection, she delights in carrying out his views so far as she can see them to be right (Psa. xlv. 10, 11). The Church, then, is the Lord's wife: she loves Him—leans upon Him—confides in Him—is jealous for His honour, worship, and dignity, and clings fondly to Him in life, death, and eternity. She, therefore, is represented by this glorious woman. And the teachings of this chapter show us that when the Church would be manifested to the world, she would be a great wonder, she would startle and astonish mankind, and would have to encounter the fierce opposition of those who are meant by the dragon, which sends out floods from his mouth to destroy her and her man child. The Church, then, especially as to her love for the Lord, His law, His kingdom, and His children, is meant by this woman. And, in truth, it is this love which forms the very essence of the Church (John xiii. 34, 35). No other qualifications have the Church in them if there be not charity in them. To be, then, in the love of truth and goodness, is to be in that blessed community, the Church, which is represented by the magnificent symbol presented to the spiritual sight of St. John, "a woman clothed with the sun." The sun corresponds to the Divine love, and this all-essential source of blessedness appears to the angels of heaven as a sun immeasurably surpassing ours in splendour, and while its holy glow warms, it also blesses them. The Lord (Jehovah) is a sun and a shield. He giveth grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly (Psa. lxxxiv. 11). The sun is the centre of the solar system. Divine love is the centre of the spiritual system. The sun

warms all nature, Divine love warms all heaven, and every heaven-seeking spirit in the world. The soul is cold, chilled, and barren, until Divine love cheers, encourages, and quickens the affections. The woman, then, was clothed with the sun, to teach us that the Church in her purity is filled, nourished, embosomed, and blessed, by the Divine love of the Lord. To be clothed with the sun is then the privilege of the Church, when she is single-hearted and true to the Saviour. She feels His presence cheering, purifying, exalting, and blessing her; He raising her up far above all that is low and sordid, with "healing in His wings." The object next offering itself for our attention is the moon. "The moon was under her feet." And when we remember the two great lights mentioned in Genesis, "the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night," we shall readily perceive that the moon corresponds to the light which shines in the soul when we are in states of spiritual night. Our limited powers tire, and must have rest, variety, and restoration. In spiritual things the mind opens with delight to the beauties of the Divine Word. Worship is welcome, and we enjoy a delightful season of refreshing. There are showers of blessing, and, like the apostles of old, we exclaim, "It is good for us to be here! Let us make tabernacles and abide." It is full day. But, after a season, we feel the necessity of a change. We have been hearing and enjoying, now we must go and act. We have had our spiritual day, now we must have night, and that is often the period of external activity. We are engaged in natural business, and our natural feelings and perceptions become dim. It is night; we are no longer conscious of the cheering presence of the light of love in which we formerly rejoiced, but we are not without light, we have the light of faith: this is the moon. Faith, like a beautiful moon, rules the night. Upon such a moon, then, the woman was observed to stand. And so it is with the true Church. She relies on an enlightened faith, not upon dark mysteries. The moon reflects light, and illuminates the darkness, and just in proportion as it faces and reflects the sun. Faith, in proportion as it perceives the Divine love prevalent in all things, affords light and comfort to its possessor. While, then, the sun of Divine love is described as embosoming the woman, the moon of faith is under her feet. The one affords nourishment, support, and joy, the other yields a firm foundation. Faith is a rock, derived from the Rock of Ages. And a clear, firm, heartfelt, rational, spiritual faith, will enable the members of the Church to stand firm under every trial, and to conquer in every conflict. "There was upon her head a crown of twelve stars." The stars are used to represent the glorious possessions of this woman, because they correspond to the smaller lights of religion afforded by individual truths. When we clearly see and know the spiritual lesson afforded by each verse of the Holy Word, it becomes a star in the firmament of the soul. When the mind is well stored with the sacred knowledge of Divine things, it is like the heavens in the night-time, when the sky is radiant and robed with brilliancy. When the soul has no longer the bright manifest presence of the Sun of Righteousness, and shade and darkness come on, it is a blessed thing to have one and then another small but holy light breaking in upon us like star after star, which shows its lovely ray in the evening, until the whole gorgeous canopy is lighted up. The twelve stars represent all the knowledge of Divine things. The number twelve in the usage of the Divine Word represents all things both of goodness and truth: it is the compound of four and three multiplied together. The woman is said to have a diadem of twelve stars, to teach us that she loves and honours all the instructions that come from the Lord: all the knowledges of goodness and truth are to her as so many stars, and she makes them her glory and her crown. The head represents the highest intellectual faculty, and a diadem the wisdom which enriches and adorns that faculty in the Lord's true servants. They do not esteem the knowledge of Him and His kingdom as things indifferent; they are the glories of their intellect: they do not wear them about their feet; they are their crown. "And she, being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." The man child which she desired to bring forth represents the new system of doctrine and order and society, which she desired to initiate. Instead of the love of self which had so long desolated society, and made God's earth a scene of turmoil, struggle, and distress, she desires to substitute the love of God, and love to one another. Instead of life's business being regarded as a mere worldly pursuit, she would teach all men in all things to live the life of heaven. Such is the new system of doctrine and practice which the Lord's new Church would fain engender. But ah! she cries, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. When society has been so long formed upon the two great sources of mischief, selfishness and mystery, as so-called Christendom

has, we need not wonder that purer principles should at first be received with difficulty. This difficulty arises from two causes, a contrary faith and a contrary life. Let it then be our first and chief aim to bring the rule of the man child fully into our daily conduct, and evincing an example in our lives of the blessedness of living for heaven and earth at the same time, we shall then be able to assist others in their life-work by encouragement and counsel, and that not only in private but in public matters. For surely the woman cries loudly that the earth is groaning from a thousand sorrows, which are but the results of ignorance, folly, and falsehood. (*J. Bailey, Ph.D.*)

The sun-clothed woman:—1. We have the image of a "woman." Woman was made out of Adam. Adam was "the figure of Him that was to come." Christ is "the second Adam." And the wife of the second Adam is the Church, made out of Him by the hand and Spirit of God from that deep sleep of His for the sins of the world. 2. This woman is in the way of motherhood. This is the characteristic of the Church in every period of its existence. The Church is meant for the work of begetting and bearing saints. It is not for show but for fruitfulness—for the bringing forth of a royal seed of God, to inherit His kingdom, and to rule and reign in the ages of eternity. 3. This woman is magnificently arrayed. Of course, no mere creature, or any number of creatures, can be literally dressed with the sun. It is only a pictorial representation, which is to be figuratively understood. The sun is the fairest and most brilliant thing our eyes have ever seen. It is the great orb of brightness. To be clothed with it, one would needs be clothed with light. And so it is with the Church and the people of God. Jesus says, they are "the children of light" (Luke xvi. 8). It is the office and end of all God's merciful appointments "to turn men from darkness to light" (Acts xxvi. 18). The Church has ever been an illuminated body. Its children are not of darkness, but of the day. While others grope in darkness they are arrayed in light. The sun is at the same time the great light-giver. It radiates brightness as well as possesses it. And to be clothed with the sun, one must necessarily be a glorious dispenser of illumination. And such is the Church. Its members and ministers have been the brightest lights of the ages. It is constituted and ordained for the teaching of the nations, and the bearing of the light of heaven to the benighted souls of men. The sun is likewise an orb of great excellence and purity. Nothing can diminish its glory, or taint its rays. To be clothed with it is to be clothed with unsullied excellency. And so it is with the Church. It may have shabby members, but they are not really of it. Light is the garment of God. It is the symbol of His own nature. And as all true people of His are "partakers of the Divine nature," being begotten unto Him from above, they enter also into the same clothing. The Church is robed with the sun. 4. This woman is victorious in her position. She has "the moon under her feet." As the sun is the king of day, so the moon is the empress of night, and is a fit picture of the kingdom of darkness. And as to be clothed with the sun is to be "light in the Lord," so to tread the moon under foot is the image of victory over the powers of darkness, whether of nature, or aught else. And this is a blessed characteristic and honour of the Church. All her true members are conquerors. They have subdued their prejudices, and brought their bodies and passions under the sway of another and better dominion and discipline. The moon is under their feet. And the same is equally true of the Church as a body. She is the hero of battles and victories. Kings have combined to exterminate her, tyrants have oppressed her, children have betrayed her, friends have deserted her, but still she has lived on. The moon is under her feet. 5. Still further: this woman is royal in rank and dignity. Regal gems glitter about her brow. There is "on her head a crown"—a crown "of stars." Whatever the particular allusion may be, whether to patriarchs, or tribes, or apostles, or all of these, or to the totality of her teaching agency, there flashes forth from this the unmistakable idea of kingdom and authority; yea, of celestial royalty and dominion (1 Peter ii. 9). People look with contempt upon the Church. They think her mean among the majesties of this world. They esteem her manner of life a letting down of man's proper dignity and consequence. They scorn her modesty and humility as effeminacy. But the Church is a royal woman, crowned with the stars of heaven. 6. And she is in travail to bring forth. She is persecuted; but these are not so much pains of persecution. Persecution has its spring in hell's malignity; this agonising has its origin in the love, and faith, and hope of a pious maternity. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Social Christhood and social fiendhood:—I. SOCIAL CHRISTHOOD. 1. It is glorious. Encircled with the solar beams of Divine truth. Treads down all worldliness in

its spirit and aims. 2. It is multiplying. (1) Its offspring is brought forth in pain. Who knows the anguish of those earnestly engaged in endeavouring to form Christ in men, and to bring Him forth? (2) It is brought forth to govern. Every Christly convert is a king, as well as a priest unto God. (3) It is destined for a Divine fellowship. Sublime destiny. II. SOCIAL FIENDHOOD. The "great red dragon," the old serpent, the prince of the power of the air, works in the children of disobedience everywhere. 1. His possession of enormous power. (1) Of intellect. "Seven heads." (2) Of execution. "Seven horns." (3) Of empire. "Seven crowns." (4) Of mischief (ver. 4). 2. His determined antagonism to Christhood. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Church a woman*:—1. Where John says, there appeared a great wonder in heaven, this shows us that God's works for His Church, and against her enemies, are most part wonderful. 2. In the comparing the Church to a woman, we see that of herself she is but weak, but strong is He who owns her. 3. By her description, we see that all her decking and ornaments are heavenly and spiritual. 4. More particularly, she is clothed with the sun: herewith should we likewise be clothed, to make us glorious before God, and acceptable. 5. She has the moon under her feet, which teaches all her true members in like manner to tread upon the world in affection, and never to let it have place, either in heart or head. 6. It is first said that she was clothed with the sun, and then that she trod on the moon, to show us that we will never despise the world till we put on Christ, and know the excellence of Christ and of heavenly things. (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. *A great red dragon.*—*The great war*:—A contest here is waging which enlists and engages the mightiest powers that exist. It is the great and far-reaching conflict between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between right and usurpation, between the kingdom of God and the empire of Satan, between heaven and hell—the great war of a divided universe, coming to final issue upon this little world of ours! It is largely silent and invisible. Though raging round us every hour, we perceive so little of it, that many doubt its reality. But its very hiddenness is evidence of its awful greatness. The little broils and disputes of a neighbourhood are loud, and thrust themselves on every ear, because they are confined to a level and limit within easy observation and comprehension; but this conflict we can only know by Divine revelation, because it encompasses so much of eternity, and pertains to spiritual potencies under and behind the outward ongoing of things. But, whether conscious of it or not, such a mighty strife exists, and we ourselves are all parties to it, and combatants in it. If not of the glorious woman, we are of the seven-headed and ten-horned dragon, at war with her, her seed, and her God. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The dragon foiled and the Church preserved*:—Ever since wrong commenced, there has been a bitter antagonism between it and right. Though varying with varied circumstances, all moral wrong and all falsehood have their deep origin in selfishness. This monster-evil displays itself in ten thousand ways, but in essence it is always the same, the substitute of man's individual will for the will of God. Every new unfolding of truth and goodness from heaven finds the state of society previously formed by selfishness and mystery ready to assail it, and if possible to destroy. Thus was it when the Lord Himself came upon the earth. He ushered into the world new doctrines of love and light. The serpent, then, in His case, stood ready to devour, and at length nailed Him to the Cross, crying, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" The great dragon is, then, a pretended religion, which is, however, nothing but disguised selfishness. Let us look at each of these features in detail. The serpent, as being the form on earth which corresponds to self-love in its disorderly state, when we call it selfishness, is felt to be truly so instinctively by us all, and is so used throughout the Divine Word. The great business of all religion is to conquer this serpent in every one of us. Unless selfishness is overcome, there can be no progress made. We cannot of ourselves destroy our serpents, but the Lord will give us power to do so. He says (*Luke x. 19*). By the help of Him, then, who conquered all the efforts of the powers of darkness, and sanctified His own human nature that He might give us power to purify ours, we can obtain the victory over self-love in all its unhappy forms. From being proud we can become truly humble; from being hard and stern we can become gentle and considerate; from being cold and stately we can become warm and happy. We can tread on the serpent of self-love and the scorpion of malignant falsehood, and deprive them of that life by which all things die around them, and fill their places with that heavenly life which is the source of every blessedness. The great and terrible figure before us, then, is indicative of a system which,

though prepared to soar, and having much power and much adornment, yet is deeply grounded in selfishness, and would be ready with all its might to oppose the new Church and its heavenly doctrines. It was a serpent, but a serpent with wings—a dragon. Wings are the means by which birds soar, and they correspond to those general truths by means of which men's thoughts soar. But the wings of the dragon are false principles of religion, by which there is an imitation of truth, but only an imitation. There is a flying upwards, but it is only the flying of a serpent. That is to say, it is a system of pretended truth respecting God, and heaven and eternal things, but altogether, in its interior character, selfish. It would be constructed with great ingenuity and skill, indicated by its having seven heads. It would have much power of persuasiveness and apparent truth intimated by its ten horns, and would make a great display of heavenly wisdom, misapplied. The heads are seven, to signify, as that number ever does, completeness, and a relation to holy things; but as they are heads of the dragon, they represent that completed, but perverted, ingenuity by which a false religion satisfies its deluded adherents. Horns are the emblems of power. Horned animals push, and exert their power by means of their horns. The crowns, or diadems, as the Greek word more properly expresses, are literally fillets or bands for the head, beautified with precious stones. They represent, therefore, a display of numerous heavenly truths of considerable brilliancy, for these are spiritual precious stones, but decorating principles inwardly false, nothing but dragon's heads. Every religion lives by its real or supposed power of meeting the demands of the soul for inward peace and everlasting happiness. True religion is genuine, pure, healthful, and wears the glorious beauties of heavenly knowledge gracefully. False religion is inwardly corrupt, but decorates herself with many heavenly excellences to charm by outward show, and to hide its interior iniquity. Such, then, is the system before us; secretly the same selfishness which has been the groundwork in every age of all the misery which has afflicted the whole world; but having an apparent air of great intelligence, great plausibility, great power, and an abundant use of the holy truths of the Word, ready, however, to oppose the Lord's bride, the New Jerusalem, and devour her manly and genuine doctrine. Selfishness has decorated itself with the appearance of religion, but by its fruits we may know it. It can fly abroad, and show itself as soaring to heaven, but it is only a flying serpent. (*J. Bailey, Ph.D.*)

Vers. 5, 6. She brought forth a man child.—*The Church protected*:—1. The godly of the Christian Church brought forth by the pains of the apostles and their successors, are called but one man child: which teaches, that all the true members of Christ's Church should be in a holy unity but as one man (Acts iv. 32); and of masculine courage for the truth (Jer. ix. 3) against all opposition. 2. Whereas that which is primely proper to Christ is in a secondary respect attributed to His Church, to rule all nations with a rod of iron; we learn the strict union that is between Christ and His Church (Acts ix. 4). 3. Whereas it is said that the man child was caught up to God and to His throne, we see—(1) Satan's disappointment in all his attempts against Christ's Church (Psa. ii. 4). (2) What happiness and high preferment abides God's children at last, however they be troubled or despised here. (3) How joyful may death be to them, who is justly called the king of terrors to others. (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. The woman fled into the wilderness.—*The emblem of the church militant*:—"And the woman," there is the frailty of her nature; "fled," there is the uncertainty of her state; "into the wilderness," there is the place of her retiredness; "where she is nourished by God," there is the staff of her comfort; "a thousand two hundred and three score days," there is the term of her obscurity, and the period of all her troubles. 1. First her origin. 2. Her fruitfulness. The honour of women is their childbearing. The Church a fruitful mother, the mother of all that live by faith. 3. Her tenderness. Such is the temper of the militant Church, in fear always, weeping continually for her children, never out of trouble in one place or other. 4. Her weakness or impotency. Howsoever she be always strong in the Lord, and the power of His might. 5. Her frailty. All those usual similitudes whereby the Scripture setteth the Church militant before our eyes, show her frailty and imbecility. She is a vine, a lily, a dove, a flock of sheep in the midst of ravening wolves. What tree so subject to take hurt as a vine, which is so weak that it needeth continual binding and supporting, so tender that if it be pricked deep it bleedeth to death? No flower so soft and without all defence or

shelter as a lily; no fowl so harmless as the dove that hath no gall at all; no cattle so oft in danger as sheep and lambs in the midst of wolves. This picture might have been taken of the Church as she fled from Pharaoh into the wilderness, or as she fled into Egypt from Herod, or as she fled into all parts of the earth in the time of the first persecutions from heathen emperors, in all which her trials she gained more than she lost. For as Justin Martyr rightly observed, "persecution is that to the Church which pruning is to the vine, whereby it is made more fruitful." (*D. Featly, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-11. **There was war in heaven.**—*War in heaven*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE WAR OF REBEL ANGELS IN HEAVEN. 1. Wilful. They brought it on themselves. 2. Irreconcilable. (1) On the part of God. (2) This war is irreconcilable on the part of rebel angels also, for when they sinned that moment their natures were changed. The passions of the soul, and the affections of the heart, which once so sweetly harmonised, were thrown into disorder and became as jarring elements, or as the troubled sea that cannot rest. 3. Unreasonable. It was a war of ingratitude, of folly, of madness—was a war against duty, against interest, against happiness itself; a war, in short, for which not only the justice of God must for ever condemn them, but the voice of reason, and the voice of the whole intelligent creation. 4. It was to rebel angels a most fatal and disastrous war. They gained nothing, but lost much. (1) They lost the favour of God, even that favour which is life, and that lovingkindness which is better than life. (2) They lost their own moral loveliness. (3) They lost their seats in heaven. II. COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE WAR OF REBEL ANGELS IN HEAVEN WITH THE WAR OF REBEL MEN ON EARTH. 1. Was the war of rebel angels a wilful war? So also is the war of rebel men. 2. Was the war of rebel angels an irreconcilable war? Thank God, here we can drop the comparison, and take up the contrast. Yes, on this theatre of war, in the midst of heaven-daring rebels, our blessed Redeemer has, by the shedding of His most precious blood, made the great atonement. 3. Was the war of rebel angels an unreasonable war? And what shall we say of the war of rebel men? Angels sinned against creating goodness—man against redeeming love. Angels warred under black despair—man under hope of heavenly grace. The sword of justice pursued revolting angels—the wings of mercy were outstretched to shelter revolting man. And yet man rebels! 4. Was the war of rebel angels fatal and disastrous? So, also, most assuredly, will be the continued war of rebel men. Millions have already fallen in the impious contest, and shall rise no more. (*D. Baker, D.D.*) *The heavenly and the earthly conflict*:—1. It is here indicated that we are members of a larger community than that which is apparent to our senses; a community which gathers into itself all intelligent souls, all spirits which God has made, all who at whatever distance can approach Him in adoration or prayer. You and I, busy as we are with our occupations, our human interests, our sympathies, more or less wide with politics and society, blind as we are to the eternity in which even now we move, are one in life and hope with sons and servants and ministers of God, whose number cannot be counted for multitude. Where they are and what they are, whether they be in our midst as we sit here, or whether they tenant yonder far-off stars; whether their shape be what Hebrew poets imagined, and Italian painters painted, or whether it be some new and to us unknown clothing of the spirit—are questions about which we may dream, but to which we can give no answer. It is sufficient for us to know that between us and God is not the deep void of an appalling nothingness, but beings who, like us, are conscious of His presence; and some at least of whom if, unlike us, they need not pray, can at least, like us, bow down their faces and adore. 2. The text implies also that in that larger community there is the same great conflict going on which is for ever raging here—the conflict for mastery between evil and good. This present world of human souls is not the only scene of strife. For back in the remote and incalculable past we read of angels who "kept not their first estate"; and far on in the perhaps still distant future we read of "war in heaven." Stretched between the two is human history, and all the acted problems of which history is the sum. It is not given to us to fight the great battle which St. Michael is represented as fighting with the dragon; but it is given to us to fight a battle apparently smaller, but in fact as great, which involves the same principles, and which is only another form of the same universal struggle. What is it, for example, to tell a lie? It seems but a little thing: the yielding to a sudden impulse—the movement of a muscle or two—a faint vibration of the air—and the lie is told. We forget it, and all seems over. And what is it to tell the truth instead of a lie?

Only a momentary resolution—the perhaps reluctant passing of a sentence in the judgment-hall of the conscience—a breath, and nothing more. And yet on these two courses depend issues which stretch out into illimitable space, and into endless time. As the balance of motives sways to truth or to falsehood the soul ranges itself in one of two great armies; it is one more victory or one more defeat for the cause of goodness and of God. The battlefield is not some vast interstellar space in which all the gathered spiritual hosts are massed in dense array, but the prosaic ground of our studies, our shops, and our dining-rooms. The battle is not waged so much at some supreme moments of mental struggle, when all the forces of our nature come into conscious play, but in the subtler form of the setting aside of plausible motives, and the struggling with apparently trivial sins. “Do this—it is very pleasant, and will do no real harm.” “Do this—it is almost necessary, and the little wrong of it can soon be undone.” Sometimes we listen and sometimes we refuse! and all our lives long, day by day and hour by hour, we alternate between victory and defeat, in a struggle which sometimes becomes a despair. For the path of holiness is not the calm ascent of a marble stairway; it is for all of us, for some no doubt more than for others, a life-long journey over a rugged and sometimes uncertain road, a stumbling over many stones, a wandering into many a by-path, a fall into many a snare; and when heaven’s gates open to us at last, they open to a tattered traveller with a worn and weary soul. But for all there need be no despair. The victory is slow to come, but it comes at last; and its coming, for this world at least, depends, in God’s providence, not on angels and archangels, but upon you and me and men like ourselves. It depends on our doing the best we individually can, with the help which is given to us from above, to crush in our own souls, and in the sphere in which we move, the daily and hourly temptations to selfishness, to injustice, to untruth, to uncharitableness, to indolence, and to irritability. Every dishonest act which we decline to perform, every falsehood which we refuse to utter, every uncharitable word which we leave unsaid, every sensual impulse which we crush, is for ourselves, for the world of men, for the world of spirits of which we are members, one more thwarting of the power of evil, one more victory of the power of good, one more step towards that consummation when the great choir of intelligent souls shall circle round the Father of spirits from whom both they and we derive our life, and to whom both we and they alike return. (*Edwin Hatch, D.D.*)

Hope of the final triumph of good:—Looking at these words from a Christian’s point of view, we are reminded by them that whatever else was meant by the war in heaven of which they speak, they, at least, mean for us that the powers of evil have done their utmost to overcome Christ and the powers of good, and have failed—that Christ has proved good to be stronger than evil, and light than darkness. And the high hope is raised that He has done this for the whole universe, for the spirits in every other world—if such there be—as well as for the spirits of us poor men struggling with evil in this. That He has done it for us, is what His gospel tells us. The powers that are for us, we are taught, are greater than the powers that are against us. God the Father is for us. Christ the Son, the express image of His person and character, is for us. The Spirit which communes with our spirit, and stirs up conscience, and keeps it alert against the foe, and helps our weakness, and disturbs and tortures us with remorse when we yield to temptation—this Spirit is for us. All good influences are for us and help us against sin, and these influences begin early, and last while life lasts in some one or more of their manifold shapes—the words of our parents, the little prayers they taught us, the words and example of dear friends that are gone, the softening power of sorrow, the warnings of sickness and pain, the calm, peaceful face of the just man, the turbid complexion, the restless eye, and repulsive look of the wicked, the influence of a familiar friend, the influence of a good book, the influence of the best of books, the blessings of thought and labour, and of duty done, the power of prayer and communion with God, the power which words of truth, of charity, of wisdom have over us, the pleasure we draw from beauty, whether in poetry, in painting, or in music—these, and ten thousand other influences with which all of us may, in one way or other, surround ourselves, are all of them so many ministering angels which fight under Christ’s banner on our side against that which is false and evil, and for that which is good and true—and all proclaim a victory won elsewhere for good, which shall in the end be a victory here too—complete and final over evil. There is another spiritual and eternal truth here. We are told the good angels conquered the bad angels and their leader, and drove them out. Now, again, whatever we may choose to say of this account, at least it suggests

a very plain and wholesome lesson. When we think of angels at all, we may imagine that the great difference between us and them is that they are strong and we are weak; but this festival warns us that this is not so. The great difference between us and them is, that they are obedient, and we are disobedient; they are humble, and we are proud. All other differences lie in that. The strong good angels beat the strong bad angels, because the one were obedient to God's laws, the others were rebellious against them. Michael overcame the dragon, because Michael was God's champion, and the dragon was his own. The one depended upon God, the other depended on himself. We may call this a story, an allegory, still there is an abiding truth in it. Say, for a moment, it is a story, then this is the moral of the tale. Obedience is strength; disobedience ensures defeat. In science, in knowledge, in conduct, in religion, obedience, humility, and trust in God, are qualities without which no discoveries are made, no advance accomplished, no virtue attained, no holiness perfected. They are qualities without which our characters are poor and weak, our ways unstable, and our thoughts and desires mainly selfish. (*John Congreve, M.A.*) Michael and his angels fought.—*Who is Michael?*—It is in itself probable that the Leader of the hosts of light will be no other than the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The dragon leads the hosts of darkness. The Son has been described as the opponent against whom the enmity of the dragon is especially directed. When the war begins, we have every reason to expect that as the one leader takes the command, so also will the other. There is much to confirm this conclusion. The name Michael leads to it, for that word signifies "Who is like God?" and such a name is at least more appropriate to a Divine than to a created being. In the New Testament, too, we read of "Michael the Archangel" (Jude 9)—there seems to be only one, for we never read of archangels—and an archangel is again spoken of in circumstances that can hardly be associated with the thought of any one but God (1 Thess. iv. 16). Above all, the prophecies of Daniel, in which the name Michael first occurs, may be said to decide the point. A person named Michael there appears on different occasions as the defender of the Church against her enemies (Dan. x. 13, 21), and once at least in a connexion leading directly to the thought of our Lord Himself (Dan. xii. 1-3). These considerations justify the conclusion that the Michael now spoken of is the representative of Christ. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*) *St. Michael and all angels*.—We need only remark, with reference to the combatants whom we find engaged the one against the other, that they are undoubtedly good and evil angels, Michael the archangel being the leader of the first, and Satan, or the devil, the leader of the second. The battle is between those angels which have never swerved from allegiance to God, and mighty spirits that "kept not their first estate." Now, though St. John may have intended to delineate a long subsequent struggle between evil and good, we can hardly doubt that he derived his figures from the first moment of apostasy, when rebellion broke out in the heavenly hosts, and evil appeared in the universe. There is often much said as to the mysteriousness of the entrance of evil, regard being had only to its entrance into the world which we inhabit. But in reality the mysteriousness belongs to an earlier stage. It is not very wonderful that man should fall when there was a devil to tempt him; the wonder is that there should have been a tempter. We may proceed from one order of being to another, and so observe the propagation of evil; but sooner or later we must come to a point at which evil commences spontaneously—at which, that is, it originates itself: for there is no way of explaining how, under the economy of God, any creature can be sinful, except by allowing that some creature made himself sinful. And Scripture confirms this conclusion. And it would appear to have been through pride that Satan originally transgressed. And it is further to be observed that idolatry has been the chief sin to which in all ages Satan has tempted mankind; as though his great aim was to attract to himself the worship due only to God, so that he might in a measure substitute himself for God, and thus be upon earth what, on the popular supposition, he had impiously and profanely attempted to be in heaven. But whatever may have been the precise object at which his pride moved Satan to aim, it is certain that it brought him into opposition to God, or placed him in a condition of revolt to His authority. And it is also certain that he was not solitary in rebellion. But legions there also were which stood faithful in the midst of the growing apostasy. And it would seem more than probable that what is delineated under the imagery of a battle is nothing but that contest between the evil and the good, which took place through temptation upon the one side and resistance upon the other. The battle was the battle of principle—apostate angels plying the unfallen with sollicita-

tions to rebellion, and the unfallen withstanding those temptations and maintaining their allegiance—certain squadrons of the heavenly hosts, with Satan at their head, endeavouring to draw into their own sinfulness the remainder who, with Michael as their leader, were still faithful to their God. And it gives us a very striking representation of the fury and the shock of temptation, that the effort on the part of angels to involve others in apostasy should be set forth as the assault of an army upon army—nothing less than the meeting torrents of hostile battalions being stern enough to express the fearful collision. Alas! it is not so with ourselves. We know little of what may be called the shock of being tempted. There must be the perfection of holiness in order to the perfection of this. It may help to satisfy us as to what our Redeemer endured from temptation in the struggle maintained with His repugnance to evil—it may help, we say, to satisfy us as to this, that what good angels endured while solicited to rebellion is like the crash when one belted squadron is sword to sword with another. But temptation was necessary; and then it was, according to the figurative representation, when good angels had been sufficiently exposed to the onslaught of evil, that God interfered as a God of judgment, and banished from His presence those who disputed His authority. The great dragon was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out of heaven. “Neither was their place found any more in heaven.” It was a final expulsion when Satan and his angels were cast out from heaven; there was no mercy, there was no plan of redemption, by which the apostate might regain their lost place. But though it was foreknown to God that Satan would prevail over man though he had not prevailed over Michael and his angels, it was also foreknown that a Mediator would interpose, and should finally “destroy all the works of the devil.” It was not to hold good of man, when banished from paradise, “neither was their place found any more in heaven.” And therefore there can be no ground for arraigning the goodness of God, in that the dragon and his angels were allowed to plant themselves there. There was to be provided immeasurably more than an equivalent to all the evil wrought; and what charge is there against mercy, when the gift of a Saviour in store is set against the allowance of a tempter? Now, hitherto we have confined ourselves to what may be called the literal interpretation of the passage under review. However figurative may be the mode of description, we are certified that there are orders of spiritual beings higher than our own, that a large section of those creatures apostatised from God, while others, though tempted to rebellion, continued faithful and were then confirmed in happiness, so as to be placed beyond the power of falling. It is not necessarily at all a metaphorical representation that “Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and his angels,” but this actual battle gave a metaphor expressive of other conflicts between evil and good. Other conflicts, in short, are likened to and shadowed forth by one of which heaven itself was the scene; but this obviously gives a literal character to the first battle, by which the imagery is supplied that is used in this passage. Our text most probably refers to the downfall of heathenism in the downfall of the Roman empire. The “war in heaven” is the contest between Christianity and paganism; the leading combatants are the Christian preachers, martyrs, and confessors on the one side, and persecuting emperors, magistrates, and priests on the other. The former are likened to Michael and his angels, because God and good spirits were on their side; the latter to Satan and his angels, because their cause was emphatically that of the devil, and all his powers were employed and exerted for it. And when Michael and his angels cast out the devil and his angels, the great revolution under Constantine is depicted, which deposed heathenism from all rule and authority, and advanced Christianity to dominion and empire. But we need not dwell longer on the prophetic import of our text, our object being answered, if we can make you see that there is so actual a conflict between evil angels and good as may furnish metaphor for any high contest which goes forward on the stage of this creation, when the cause of God and Christ is that which marshals to the fight. Ah! men and brethren, ye who have not cared anything for the soul, who through that carelessness have wrought the defeat of good angels and strengthened the devices of bad, be ye moved by the intense interest which mighty spirits take in you to take some interest in yourselves, and not to throw away that immortality which the unfallen cherubim would have you spend gloriously with them, and which fiends are plotting to involve in their own fearful anguish. “Michael and his angels have fought against the dragon, and the dragon has fought and his angels”; but the dragon has “not prevailed”; he has been “overcome through the blood of the Lamb”; and so thorough is the moral change, so complete the substitution of the soul now turned into a

habitation of God—the dominion of righteousness for the dominion of evil, that we may say of the apostate crew, as was said of them when they were hurled from their original abode, “Neither is their place found any more” in him. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 9. **The great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.**—*The foes of God and of His Church*.—I. OUR FOE IS A PERSONAL ONE (ver. 9). II. HE IS AN OLD ONE. “The devil sinneth from the beginning” (1 John iii. 8; John viii. 44). III. HE IS A DARING ONE. IV. HIS ATTEMPTS ARE OFTEN FAILURES. “The dragon warred and his angels, and they prevailed not” (ver. 8). V. HE IS AN ANGRY FOE. “He hath great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time” (ver. 12). VI. HE IS A MALICIOUS ONE (ver. 13). VII. HE IS A WATCHFUL AND CRAFTY ONE (vers. 4, 13, 15), varying his methods according to the case in hand. VIII. HE IS A CIRCUMSCRIBED FOE. This chapter tells us of three limits put to him and to his power. 1. One, of space. He is cast down to earth. He is “the God of this world” (2 Cor. iv. 4). 2. A second, of time. “A time, and times, and half a time.” 3. There is yet a third limit, that of force. “The earth helped the woman,” &c. (ver. 16). We are taught in Scripture that there are five ways by which his power is restricted and his intention foiled. (1) There is providential dispensation (vers. 6, 14, 16; 1 Cor. x. 13). (2) There is angelic ministry (ver. 7). (3) There is the direct exertion of Christ’s commanding word (Matt. xvii. 18). (4) There is the counteracting power of Divine grace (2 Cor. xii. 9). (5) There is the intercession of our Redeemer (Luke xxii. 31, 32). IX. HE IS A FOE WITH WHOSE DEVICES WE HAVE TO RECKON IN FIGHTING THE BATTLE OF LIFE (ver. 17). Note—1. He is one at whom we cannot afford to laugh, and whose existence we cannot afford to deny. 2. He is a foe before whom we need not quail. 3. He is a foe to whom not an inch of room should be given (Eph. iv. 27). 4. He is a foe for whose onsets we should prepare by a survey and appropriation of heavenly forces. 5. He is a foe on whose ultimate defeat and complete discomfiture we may surely and confidently reckon if we look to Jesus. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Satan the great dragon*.—In calling him the dragon, the Holy Spirit seems to hint at his mysterious power and character. To us a spirit such as he is must ever be a mystery in his being and working. Satan is a mysterious personage though he is not a mythical one. We can never doubt his existence if we have once come into conflict with him; yet he is to us all the more real because so mysterious. If he were flesh and blood it would be far easier to contend with him; but to fight with this spiritual wickedness in high places is a terrible task. As a dragon he is full of cunning and ferocity. In him force is allied with craft; and if he cannot achieve his purpose at once by power, he waits his time. He deludes, he deceives; in fact, he is said to deceive the whole world. What a power of deception must reside in him, when under his influence the third part of the stars of heaven are made to fall, and myriads of men in all ages have worshipped demons and idols! He has steeped the minds of men in delusion, so that they cannot see that they should worship none but God, their Maker. He is styled “the old serpent”; and this reminds us how practised he is in every evil art. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies. After thousands of years of constant practice in deception he is much too cunning for us. If we think that we can match him by craft we are grievous fools, for he knows vastly more than the wisest of mortals; and if it once comes to a game of policies, he will certainly clear the board, and sweep our tricks into the bag. To this cunning he adds great speed, so that he is quick to assail at any moment, darting down upon us like a hawk upon a poor chick. He is not everywhere present; but it is hard to say where he is not. He cannot be omnipresent; but yet, by that majestic craft of his, he so manages his armies of fallen ones that, like a great general, he superintends the whole field of battle, and seems present at every point. No door can shut him out, no height of piety can rise beyond his reach. He meets us in all our weaknesses, and assails us from every point of the compass. He comes upon us unawares, and gives us wounds which are not easily healed. But yet, powerful as this infernal spirit certainly must be, his power is defeated when we are resolved never to be at peace with him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 10–12. **Now is come salvation.**—*The heavenly song of victory*.—This is a song of heaven—of that heaven from which the dragon had been cast out. I. THE

SALVATION. It is "the salvation" that is here sung of—the salvation of Him whose name is Jesus, the Saviour. It is salvation—not consisting of one blessing or one kind of blessing, but of many; made up of everything which can be indicated by the reversal of our lost condition. It is not done at once, but in parts and at sundry times, each age bringing with it more of "salvation" in every sense; unfolding it, building it up, gathering in new objects, overcoming new enemies, occupying new ground, erecting new trophies. **II. THE POWER.** This is the more common rendering of the word (not "strength"), as when Christ's miracles are spoken of, or "the powers of the world to come." As yet God's power has not been fully manifested; it has been hidden. Many trophies, no doubt, it has won; many enemies it has defeated; many brands it has plucked from the burning; but the full revelation of its greatness is yet to come. When that day arrives, earth as well as heaven shall rejoice. **III. THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD.** It is the kingdom—the kingdom of kingdoms; not of Satan or man, as now, but of God, nay, our God. Our God, says heaven; our God, re-echoes earth. **IV. THE AUTHORITY OF HIS CHRIST.** "The Christ of God" is the full name for Jesus of Nazareth—God's Messiah—He in whom all royal, priestly, judicial, prophetic power is invested. To this Messiah all power has been given, all authority entrusted, in heaven, and earth, and hell. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) **Victory.**—1. By this song of thanksgiving we see what should be our rejoicing and duty in thanking God in like manner; to wit, that Christ, His Church and cause prevails; and that Satan and his instruments are foiled. 2. When the former prevail, we see the great benefit to man that redounds thereby; to wit, salvation comes, and strength, and the kingdom of our God to reign in men's hearts, and the power of His Christ to be seen in their lives. 3. Whereas it is said that the accuser of the brethren is cast down; then as it is said (*Isa. l. 9*; *Rom. viii. 33*), who is it that can condemn, or lay anything to the charge of the Lord's elect? It is He that helps and justifies us, and has cast down the accuser of the brethren. 4. Here is a great comfort likewise, that there is such a sweet communion between the glorious saints in heaven and the Church militant on earth; that when they speak of God they say, "our God," and when of the Church on earth, "our brethren." (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*) **The accuser of our brethren is cast down.**—**The accuser of the brethren.**—**I. THE ACCUSER.** The accuser, in this instance, is the enemy of our souls. An accuser need not necessarily be a foe—a friend may accuse; but his relationship to us depends upon the object he has in view by accusing us. If his intention be to harass and vex the accused, then he is an enemy; but if his design be to reform, then, indeed, he is a friend. Though the law accuses, the law is not our enemy. The law is our "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." But the design of Satan in accusing the saints is to afflict them, and not that he may induce them to amend their ways; it is not zeal for the glory of God that urges him to blame them for their remissness; he merely takes advantage of their failings to molest them. **II. THE ACCUSED.** "The brethren." He does not accuse his own subjects. He commends in them the works which in the children of God he censures. It is better for us that he should be our censor than that he should be our vindicator; preferable that he should impeach us than that he should be our advocate. **III. THE ACCUSATION.** The impeachments of Satan, however fictitious they may be found to be in the aggregate, always have a sprinkling of the truth in them; just so much as will give an air of justness to the whole; for our arch-enemy is well aware that falsehood in and of itself cannot injure. Were they charged with neglecting God's house the accusation would be false, and consequently would not affect them; but when they are accused of alienating their affections from God, they feel the justness of the charges and are grieved—there is sufficient force in the accusation to afflict their conscience. A slander was never known to be either wholly true or entirely false. Satan is incapable of telling the truth as truth. It were as impossible for him to confine himself wholly to it as that the sun should shed showers of rain, or that water should burn. He is "the father of lies"; but he makes use of the truth to keep his inventions together. It is difficult to detect his devices and contrivances—he is capable of transforming himself into an angel of light. Yea, he usurps even the functions of the Holy Spirit; he approaches the Christian while he is meditating upon his performances, and insidiously breathes his charges of lukewarmness and worldliness, causing his heart to bleed thereby. Neither is he to be recognised by the doctrines he inculcates. What measures does the Holy Spirit make use of in convincing the sinner of his wickedness? Does He show the evil of sin? Satan

also does this. Does He point to the stringency and rigour of the law? So does Satan. But although he is not recognisable in his doctrines, he may be easily detected in the inferences which he draws from those doctrines. The conclusions which he invariably draws from his teachings are couched in such language as the following: Firstly, thy sins are too great to be forgiven. Secondly, thou mayest as well suffer punishment for much as for little. Thirdly, God is very unrelenting.

IV. THE TRIBUNAL. It is not to be imagined that Satan gains admittance into heaven, there to lay his charges against the saints, because he has been eternally banished thence. Neither is it by any means probable that, were permission granted him to enter there, he would avail himself of it. And the reason of this is quite plain. He that bruised his head sits triumphant there. His design is to create enmity between God and His children; his purpose is to effect a breach between the saints and their heavenly Father. He endeavours to embitter their spirits when they approach God in meditation and prayer. He strives to weaken their power in prayer, and so to crush their faith as to render it powerless to bear the blessing they came to seek.

V. THE VICTORY. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." (*D. Roberts, D.D.*) *Overcoming the accuser*:—1. The accuser charges the servants of God with guilt. They are not worthy, as he alleges, to stand in the Holy Presence. To this, however, they have a triumphant reply. They do not deny that they have sinned and are unworthy; but they have God's free gift of pardon since Jesus has died. There is a Rabbinic tradition to the effect that Satan is compelled to refrain from accusations against Israel, and keep silence, on one day of the year—the great Day of Atonement. Though it be a mere legend, it indicates some true perception of the only ground on which the charge of guilt before God can be successfully met. But let us extend the statement. There is no respect of days. The peace of conscience which rests on "the blood of the Lamb" is not for one day, but for all the days of the year. There is a continual and unflinching answer of the Satanic accusation. 2. The accuser rails against the servants of God as mere self-seekers. In this respect, wicked men are very like their father the devil. Their base instinct is to suspect and jibe at goodness. All virtue is in their eyes humbug. All who seem to be in earnest for any moral or religious object are seeking praise for themselves, and perhaps money also. Disinterestedness is a dream, and holiness a fraud. So says the devil; and so say his followers. Now it may be impracticable in many instances to meet this odious charge with a complete refutation. A good man cannot prove his inward motives to all the outside world, least of all to those who wish to think the worst. To some, however, both in early and in later times of the Church, opportunity and power have been given to make a triumphant answer to the unworthy accusation of selfishness. They were exposed to cruel persecution, and obliged to show whether their hearts were so knit to Christ that they would lay down their lives for His sake. These overcame "because of the word of their testimony." Far from shirking the ordeal, they conquered by their firm endurance. What then could Satan allege? 3. We are not of "the noble army of martyrs." But all Christians are called to be martyrs in the sense of witnesses, and all are subjected to some test of fidelity. Yet every one in his own order, and according to the measure of grace which he has received; not the least effective being the little ones that honour the Lord Jesus. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.—How they conquered the dragon*:—I. ALL THE BLESSED ONES WHO ARE REJOICING IN HEAVEN WERE ONCE WARRIORS AND VICTORS HERE BELOW. We too often think of the saints that have gone before as if they were men of another race from ourselves, capable of nobler things, endowed with graces which we cannot reach, and adorned with holiness impossible to us. The mediæval artists were wont to paint the saints with rings of glory about their heads, but indeed they had no such halos; their brows were furrowed with care even as ours, and their hair grew grey with grief. Their light was within, and we may have it; their glory was by grace, and the same grace is available for us. 1. It is clear from our text that every one of the saints in heaven was assailed by Satan. How could there be a victory without a battle? 2. The glorified, in addition to having been attacked, were led to resist the evil one, for nobody overcomes an antagonist without fighting. 3. We find that these warriors all overcame, for heaven is not for those who fight merely, but for those who overcome. "I do fight against my sin," says one. Brother, do you overcome it? Attack, resistance, and victory must be yours. 4. So, then, in heaven they all rejoice because they have overcome, for the next verse to our text puts it, "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is a

theme for gladness in heaven that they did fight and resist and overcome. There is joy among the angels, for they had their conflict when they stood firm against temptation; but ours will be a victory peculiarly sweet, a song especially melodious, because our battle has been peculiarly severe. II. **THE VICTORS ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME WEAPONS.** 1. First, the blood of the Lamb: it was theirs. The blood of the Lamb will not help us until it becomes our own. It is the blood of the covenant, and it secures all the covenant gifts of God to us. It is the life of our life. So, then, they had the blood of the Lamb, and they possessed the privilege which the blood brings with it. 2. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. Now, what is the testimony of the saints? It is a testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb. If ever we are to conquer Satan in the world, we must preach the atoning blood. III. While they all fought with the same weapons **THEY ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME SPIRIT**; for the text says, "they loved not their lives unto the death." 1. The expression indicates dauntless courage. They were never afraid of the doctrine of a bleeding Saviour. Let us never be ashamed of our hope. 2. These men, in addition to dauntless courage, had unanswering fidelity. They "loved not their lives unto the death." They thought it better to die than deny the faith. 3. More than that, they were perfect in their consecration. "They loved not their lives unto the death." They gave themselves up, body soul, and spirit, to the cause of which the precious blood is the symbol, and that consecration led them to perfect self-sacrifice. No Christian of the true type counts anything to be his own. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The blood of the Lamb, the conquering weapon*:—I. **WHAT IS THIS CONQUERING WEAPON?** 1. The blood of the Lamb signifies, first, the death of the Son of God. The sufferings of Jesus Christ might be set forth by some other figure, but His death on the Cross requires the mention of blood. The death of Christ is the death of sin and the defeat of Satan, and hence it is the life of our hope, and the assurance of His victory. Because He poured out His soul unto the death, He divided the spoil with the strong. 2. Next, by "the blood of the Lamb" we understand our Lord's death as a substitutionary sacrifice. It is not said that they overcame the arch-enemy by the blood of Jesus, or the blood of Christ, but by the blood of the Lamb; and the words are expressly chosen because, under the figure of a lamb, we have set before us a sacrifice. Sin must be punished; it is punished in Christ's death. Here is the hope of men. 3. Furthermore, I understand by the expression, "The blood of the Lamb," that our Lord's death was effective for the taking away of sin. When John the Baptist first pointed to Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Our Lord Jesus has actually taken away sin by His death. II. I have shown you the sword; now I come to speak to the question, **How do you use it?** "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." When a man gets a sword, you cannot be quite certain how he will use it. A gentleman has purchased a very expensive sword with a golden hilt and an elaborate scabbard; he hangs it up in his hall, and exhibits it to his friends. Occasionally he draws it out from the sheath, and he says, "Feel how keen is the edge!" The precious blood of Jesus is not meant for us merely to admire and exhibit. We must not be content to talk about it, and extol it, and do nothing with it; but we are to use it in the great crusade against unholiness and unrighteousness, till it is said of us, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Let me show you your battle-field. Our first place of conflict is in the heavenlies, and the second is down below on earth. 1. First, then, you who believe in the blood of Jesus, have to do battle with Satan in the heavenlies; and there you must overcome him "by the blood of the Lamb." "How?" say you. First, you are to regard Satan this day as being already literally and truly overcome through the death of the Lord Jesus. Satan is already a vanquished enemy. By faith grasp your Lord's victory as your own, since He triumphed in your nature and on your behalf. I would have you overcome Satan in the heavenlies in another sense: you must overcome him as the accuser. At times you hear in your heart a voice arousing memory and startling conscience; a voice which seems in heaven to be a remembrance of your guilt. All comfort drawn from inward feelings or outward works will fall short; but the bleeding wounds of Jesus will plead with overwhelming argument, and answer all. Still further, the believer will have need to overcome the enemy in the heavenly places in reference to access to God. The sacred name of Jesus is one before which he flees. This will drive away his blasphemous suggestions and foul insinuations better than anything that you can invent. We next must overcome the enemy in prayer. 2. It is time that I now showed you how this same fight is carried on on

earth. Amongst men in these lower places of conflict saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb by their testimony to that blood. Every believer is to bear witness to the atoning sacrifice and its power to save. He is to tell out the doctrine; he is to emphasise it by earnest faith in it; and he is to support it and prove it by his experience of the effect of it. You can bear witness to the power of the blood of Jesus in your own soul. If you do this, you will overcome men in many ways. First, you will arouse them out of apathy. This age is more indifferent to true religion than almost any other. The sight of the bleeding Saviour overcomes obduracy and carelessness. The doctrine of the blood of the Lamb prevents or scatters error. I do not think that by reason we often confute error to any practical purpose. We may confute it rhetorically and doctrinally, but men still stick to it. But the doctrine of the precious blood, when it once gets into the heart, drives error out of it, and sets up the throne of truth. We also overcome men in this way, by softening rebellious hearts. Men stand out against the law of God, and defy the vengeance of God; but the love of God in Christ Jesus disarms them. The Holy Spirit causes men to yield through the softening influence of the Cross. How wonderfully this same blood of the Lamb overcomes despair. Glory be to God, the blood is a universal solvent, and it has dissolved the iron bars of despair, until the poor captive conscience has been able to escape. There is nothing, indeed, which the blood of the Lamb will not overcome; for see how it overcomes vice, and every form of sin. The world is foul with evil. What can cleanse it? What but this matchless stream? Satan makes sin seem pleasure, but the Cross reveals its bitterness. This blood overcomes the natural lethargy of men towards obedience; it stimulates them to holiness. If anything can make a man holy it is a firm faith in the atoning sacrifice. When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he feels that he is not his own, but bought with a price, and therefore he must live unto Him that died for him and rose again. (*Ibid.*)

The Church's victory:—I. THE CHURCH'S VICTORY. The Church is here set before us in a state of triumph, having conquered all its enemies and received its reward. II. THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THIS VICTORY IS OBTAINED. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." III. THE CONNECTION THAT SUBSISTS BETWEEN THE MEANS AND THE END OF THE CONFLICT. 1. The blood of the Lamb is the source of the disposition which regenerated men feel when entering upon this spiritual warfare. 2. It is the blood of the sacrifice that perpetuates the conflict, by carrying on the sanctification of the soul. 3. The blood of the Lamb alone can inspire fortitude and courage for this conflict. 4. The blood of the Lamb is the only source of spiritual life, and therefore they conquer by it. It was not spilt as water upon the ground, it was the opening of the fountain of immortality for the soul of man. 5. By the blood of the Lamb they learned the example of conflicting to the death, and gathered the assurance of a glorious triumph beyond it. Two things will tend to make a man a good soldier—a readiness to leave his body a corpse on the battlefield, and a thorough conviction that ultimately his cause must succeed. Both are requisite in the spiritual strife. (*John Aldis.*)

The encouragement to increased missionary effort to be derived from the assurance of final victory:—I. We shall never be aroused to magnanimous efforts till we have a clear apprehension of THE INVISIBLE ENEMY WHO FOMENTS ALL THE OPPOSITION AGAINST CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL. 1. In the general description, mark, first, his deadly hatred to God and goodness, implied in the names Satan, the Enemy, the Adversary, the Wicked One. Next, his rage and fury, as the great Red Dragon, the Apollyon or Destroyer. Further, his craft and subtlety, as the Old Serpent, in allusion to the form under which he seduced our first parents. Next, the extent of his dominion, the whole world lying in wickedness, or, in the wicked one. 2. And what is the general method of Satan's opposition to Christ, and the salvation of men? His grand vantage-ground is the tendency in human corruption to listen to all his suggestions. He thus works his way unperceived into our hearts. 3. The place where Satan carries on this opposition is set forth in this symbolical passage as his heaven, from the popular notion of heaven as a place of eminence, of ease, safety, and enjoyment. It imports, here, the visible kingdom of Satan in its full pride and power; from which, when he is dispossessed, he is said to be cast down unto the earth. II. THE MEANS OF RESISTING THIS GREAT ADVERSARY. 1. The faithful overcame by the blood of the Lamb; and in what manner did they do this? (1) By trusting to it for their own salvation; (2) By proclaiming it to others, as men touched with the love of Him who shed it; (3) By seeing all the purposes of Almighty God centre in it. III. THE ISSUE OF THE CONFLICT. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." (*Bp. Daniel Wilson.*)

Missionary conflict and victory :—I. LET US CONSIDER MISSIONS UNDER THE ASPECT OF A VICTORY GAINED. 1. Of course the word implies conflict. The Revelation, resonant with sounds of battle, exhibits the King of Heaven upon earth as engaged in a struggle. This mode of representation only displays in pictures ideas common to the whole of the New Testament. The Church under the present dispensation is a church militant. Let us not despise or underestimate our foe. To follow Christ and to take up His cause anywhere is to challenge the world, the flesh, and the devil. 2. But the point now is that a victory has been won, and this victory is distinguished by two features, celebrated in the song heard by John, which render it extremely interesting and important for those on the threshold of life, whose privilege it is to look forward to service. (1) The accuser has been cast down, and in his casting down certain practical problems have been solved and doubts swept out of the way. No great and good movement has ever been inaugurated that did not stir up an accuser. He was maliciously busy at the outset of the missionary enterprise, and tried to raise obstacles to harass the timid. (2) Then, too, in the gospel victories is to be included a beautiful, delightful social revolution, for "now is come the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ." II. THE PRINCIPLES AND INSTRUMENTALITIES WHEREBY THIS VICTORY WAS GAINED. 1. We would not lose sight of the fact that "there was war in heaven." We have always had the supernatural support of a leader of invisible legions, whose name, "Michael," suggests the question, "Who is like unto God?" and whose guarantee, conveyed along with the marching orders, is, "Lo! I am with you alway unto the consummation of the age." 2. Looking at these words as a whole, we say they intimate conquests gained through dependence on spiritual forces. It was so, we may remind ourselves, in the conflict with the paganism of the ancient Roman world. It would be a mistake to suppose that the triumph of Christianity followed the so-called conversion of Constantine. On the contrary, he gave in his adhesion because Christianity was already on the march, firm and triumphant. The victory had been won, and it was won with the weapons of faith, hope, love, patience, forgiveness, and prayer. So also has it been in the conflict with the paganism of the modern world. God in nature, God in history, and God in grace is one God, and we may expect Him to be making each department of His rule dovetail in some way into the other, in order to the accomplishment of His purposes. 3. Three things are, we take it, specially necessary to meet the fundamental spiritual requirements of the human heart—viz., redemption; revelation; and these mediated and ministered by messengers of intense self-sacrificing sympathies. These are the very elements which are here displayed as grounds of success. (1) "They overcame because of the blood of the Lamb." Readers must note that in this book, in which the general outlines of Church history are exhibited in symbolic pictures, the blood of the Lamb holds a most prominent place. It precisely forecasts what has happened in the actual event. By the atoning sacrifice of Calvary were the missionaries' hearts first set on fire. The provision made in the death of God's dear Son for meeting their condition as sinners was what deeply agitated, and, like the touch of the "live coal from off the altar," flamed through them into the offer and entreaty, "Here are we, send us." By the same sacrifice they were sustained in their surrender. The Saviour's blood was their life. His dying wounds were not only fountains of expiation and cleansing, but also springs out of which pulsed the streams of life through the lips of faith into their thrilled hearts. Advancing with this experience, it turned out that the "story of redemption through His blood" was just the good news the heathen needed, and leaped excitedly to welcome. (2) To meet the cry for light, the ministers of grace delivered "the word of their testimony." Observe, "testimony." Not an argument, but a testimony; not a denunciation, but a testimony; not a destructive attack, but a testimony; not a "peradventure," but a testimony. This testimony, originally received by apostles from Christ and His Spirit, was by them embodied in "a word." This "word," again tasted and tested through the Spirit of Christ by believers, became in their lips and lives a "testimony." They marched to the field with this testimony, a Pentecostal glory mitring their brows and firing their tongues, and breaking out in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." They knew whom they believed, and, Philip-like, joining themselves unto the chariot of heathendom, they just preached and explained Him of whom every voice of truth in the Vedas also spoke to those in the darkness feeling after "an unknown God" to be their Shepherd and King. (3) The third reason does not occupy precisely the same level as the other two. It is not joined to them with "because." The proposal to surrender life, standing by itself, would be impotent and fruitless. It is

when united with "the blood of the Lamb and the word of testimony" that it is energised into an important factor in the product. The mode of expression seems based upon a common course in human affairs. A man takes a stand from which it is sought to divert him by threats of poverty, want, and hardship. There are some in whom the love of life is so near the surface, and so sensitive and ready to take alarm, that the above threat would be enough to make it leap to its feet instantly and shriek out, "You shall not." Others, however, are not conscious of this love at that point, and the threat does not move them. Then it is represented they will lose caste, be boycotted in society, be shut out of the road which leads to applause and power, and condemned to calumny, reprobation, scorn—or, what is worse, neglect. Some who resisted in the first stage would be sifted out here, whilst a remnant would continue yet untouched and resolute. But now I imagine the ghastly king of terrors drawing nigh to these and compelling them at close quarters to look into his cavernous, cruel face. Proud is this grisly monarch, and omnipotent in his own conceit. But many think that Death's bark is worse than his bite. I know the prospect is under some conditions appalling, and yet I can fancy those who had stood the first two tests contemplating this almost with contempt. There is, however, another deeper, darker possibility suggested. It is not merely hardship; it is not merely shame; it is not merely physical extinction; it is the sacrifice of the opportunity of self-cultivation for what seems a grander destiny in this world, and even a better, higher standing in the world to come. Many missionaries, like, e.g., Carey and Livingstone, possessed surpassing powers. They would succeed splendidly anywhere. Had they stayed in this country no one can predict the distinction to which they might have risen. To go away, say into the wilds of Africa, as evangelists is to renounce magnificent chances. Nay more. They who feel the loss most will leave the stimulus of Christian society; the bracing impulse of Christian atmosphere; the sweet help of the first day of the week, with its sacred hush and uplifting worship; the very continuance of the life of piety will be imperilled. That education and development of the faculties and qualities of mind and spirit which in itself is so delightful must be relinquished, and, so far as this world is concerned, relinquished for ever. They must cease to love their own soul, and that unto death. I believe that scores of witnesses in all ages, and, thank God, in ours also, have risen to this height; and it is in this way and by this means they have gained the victory. If you want to capture others, you must abandon self. (*R. H. Roberts, B.A.*) *Victory over the foe*:—I hope it is possible for a few minutes to interest you in the fortunes of a battle. "The fight is fought, and the victory is won. Your troops have engaged and conquered the foe." And we are told they overcame him by three modes and weapons of warfare—the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the not loving their life even unto death. The several particulars are striking; their combination is wonderful. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." Strange! But is it not true—true to a history none the less real because it is, in part at least, the history of souls? Is it not true that that Cross of pain and shame has in it the virtue of a thousand times ten thousand victories, compared with which Marathon and Salamis, Trafalgar and Waterloo, were events of temporary and fleeting significance? Is it not true that lives have been remade in their most secret, and yet in their most practical, being—remade for strength, remade for happiness, remade for usefulness, influence, and blessing to other lives, entirely by that sacrifice of the Son of God for sin which is here briefly characterised as "the blood of the Lamb"? The man who has conquered a besetting sin by reason of the blood of the Lamb is a greater hero, greater in kind as well as in degree, than the man who can count his slain enemies in some death-grapple on the Nile by tens and by twenties. But it is conceivable that there might be in some heart a strong sense of gratitude for the death of the Son of God, which as yet has nothing to say for itself as to a definite work to be done for Him. Therefore the voice from heaven speaks in the second place of the word of their testimony. The Christian owes his victory, secondly, to a word—that is, a message or revelation from God, to the truth of which he himself is witness. We have three thoughts here. First, God has spoken. A word is more than a sound. A word has meaning in it. It is the communication of mind to mind. Word is speech, and speech is, by definition, reason communicating itself. This is why Christ Himself is called by St. John "the Word." In Christ God has spoken, not in precept and prohibition only, rather in revelation of will and mind, setting before us the Divine character in human action, and saying, "This am I; this be thou. Made, and now remade in My image, bear, act, be this to thy brethren."

Thus the word becomes next a testimony. The business of the Christian is witnessing, having, as St. John says, "the witness in himself"; able from experience, able from consciousness of the power and beauty of the gospel, "to set to it his seal" that it is true. He goes about his business, speaks his daily speech, does his everyday work, as one who believes, strives not to contradict, not to belie his conviction, lives as its witness, dies as its martyr. And thus, thirdly, he overcomes because of it. The blood of the Lamb is his motive, but the Word of His testimony is his direction. Without this he might be well-intentioned, but he would neither know his enemy nor know how to cope with him. They overcame him, therefore, because of the Word of which they were witnesses. Yet another principal cause remains. "They loved not their life even unto death." Contempt for death is a great secret of victory. Even in the perpetration of deeds of darkness, the chance of success is infinitely enhanced by the willingness of the doer to die for it. The assassin who will give life for life is half assured of victory. The text speaks of a nobler strife, that of the Christian victor, and it says of him that side by side with two other things, faith in Christ's sacrifice, and faith in Christ's word, there stands this reason also for his victory, that he loved not his life. The earthly conqueror must have no friendship for his life in comparison with two other things—duty and honour. The earthly conqueror must have no charity for his life when it tries to stand between him and courage, or between him and the love of his country. 'Tis the peculiarity of the Christian victor, not always realised, perhaps, to the full, even in him, that, taking all things into account, he has a positive desire—positive desire—to "depart and be with Christ." It is not only that there are so many dark features of the world he lives in, it is rather that he knows Someone on the other side of death, whom he longs to be with. He endures as seeing the Invisible, but all the time he is seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

They loved not their lives unto the death.—*The evidence of Christianity from the persecution of Christians*:—The progress of Christianity is a most interesting object of speculation, and must appear truly wonderful when it is considered that it prevailed by means the very reverse of what might have been expected, and which have been used to establish other systems of religion or philosophy, and the corruptions of Christianity itself. Other religions had either the aid of power, or at least of the learning of the age and countries in which they were established. The founders of them were either conquerors, legislators, or men who were distinguished in life; so that independently of the doctrines they promulgated, they appeared in a respectable light to the world. On the contrary, the Founder of Christianity was an obscure person, a common mechanic, in a country the inhabitants of which were despised by the rest of the world; without the advantage of any learned education, where the greatest account was made of that advantage, and where persons destitute of it were held in contempt. The first followers of Christ were, in general, of the same low rank of life with Himself, wholly destitute in power, or of policy. They were all their lives persecuted, as He had been, and many of them died violent deaths. What then were the means by which Christianity, thus extraordinarily circumstanced, did make its way in the world, till, in the natural course of things, the very powers which opposed it came to be on its side? They were, as we are informed in my text, the death of the Founder of Christianity, and the testimony of His followers to His doctrine, miracles, and resurrection, sealed with their blood. If we consider the nature of Christianity, and the object of it, we shall see that it could not be established by any other means than these, how ill adapted soever they may, on a superficial view of things, appear to answer the end. What is Christianity but that firm belief in a future life which produces the proper regulation of man's conduct in this? Any attempt to gain belief to this, or any doctrine, by power, would have been unavailing and absurd. It is evident that nothing could make mankind believe that Christ wrought miracles, that He died, and rose from the dead, and therefore that there is a future life, to which themselves will be raised, but the proper evidence of the truth of those facts. And in distant ages, in which persons can have no opportunity of inquiring into the truth of the facts for themselves, the only evidence to them is the full conviction that they who had that opportunity did believe them. Now we cannot imagine in what manner any person can express his firm persuasion of the truth, or the value, of any set of principles, more strongly than by his suffering and dying for them. Still, however, there would have been room to doubt, if they had not persisted in their testimony, and if they had not also had both sufficient opportunity, and sufficient motives to consider and reconsider the thing. Now the witnesses were numerous, and, living together,

they must have had frequent opportunities of conversing with one another on the subject, and of comparing their observations. And surely no motive could be wanting, when all the happiness of their lives, and even life itself, was depending. How satisfactory, then, is the evidence of the truth of Christianity from the testimony of almost all its proper witnesses, as sealed with their blood, and therefore not given without the most deliberate consideration, and in opposition to the strongest inducements to declare the reverse of what they did. How much more convincing is this kind of evidence than that of men who draw their swords in defence of any cause? The man who fights hopes to get the victory, and most probably expects to secure to himself some temporal advantage. It cannot by any means, therefore, be inferred that a man may not fight for a falsehood, provided it promises to be a gainful one. We see, then, the infinite superiority of the pretensions of Christ to those of Mahomet, or of any who have endeavoured to establish a religion by violence. Our Lord, confiding in the power of truth, disclaimed all other aid, and therefore ordered His disciples not to fight, but to die. I would farther observe, that violence in support of truth is utterly contrary to the nature and genius of the Christian religion; and it supposes a temper of mind inconsistent with it, viz., hatred and revenge. And not only should we avoid all actual violence, but everything that approaches to it, as anger and abuse. If calm reasoning fail, these are not likely to succeed. As we must not make use of violence or abuse ourselves, so we should take it patiently when it is offered by others. It is generally a proof that our adversaries have nothing better to offer, and therefore is a presumption that we have truth on our side; and surely the sense of this may well enable us to bear up under any insult to which we may be exposed. A state of persecution has been the lot of truly good men, and especially of all great and distinguished characters whose aim has been to reform abuses, and introduce new light into the minds of men, in all ages. (*J. Priestley, LL.D.*) *Love triumphant*:—Geleazius, a gentleman of great wealth, who suffered martyrdom at St. Angelo, in Italy, being much entreated by his friends to recant, and thus save his life, replied, "Death is much sweeter to me with the testimony of truth, than life with its least denial."

Vers. 12-17. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens.—*The defeatibility of the devil*:—I. MIGHTY AS IS THE MASTER-FRIEND OF EVIL, HE IS NOT PROOF AGAINST DEFEATS. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens." 1. Here is a defeat implied. There is nothing permanent in error, there is no stability in wrong. As light extends, and virtue grows, all schemes of wrong, political, social, and religious, crack to pieces and tumble to ruin. 2. Here is a defeat righteously exultable. It is the joy of the prisoner quitting his cell, of the patient returning to health. II. GREAT AS HIS DEFEATS MAY BE, THEY DO NOT QUENCH HIS ANIMOSITY. "Having great wrath," &c. Like the ravenous beast of the desert, his failure to fasten his tusks in one victim whets his appetite for another. Evil is insatiable. III. HIS ANIMOSITY IS ESPECIALLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE TRUE CHURCH. "He persecuted the woman," &c. 1. Wherever the spirit of Christ is, the spirit of tenderness, humanity, self-sacrificing love, this he hates and seeks to destroy. 2. Who shall say what he pours forth from his mouth? False accusations, pernicious errors, social persecutions, &c. IV. THE TRUE CHURCH, EVEN IN TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES, IS UNDER THE SPECIAL PROTECTION OF HEAVEN. 1. The Church is in the wilderness. The way of Christly men on this earth has always been—(1) intricate; (2) dangerous; (3) gloomy. 2. Though in the wilderness, it has enormous privileges. (1) It is endowed with heaven-soaring power. (2) It has the whole earth to serve it. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Victorious rejoicing*:—1. By this exhortation of others that are in heaven to rejoice likewise, we see, that the saints of God think it not enough for themselves to rejoice at the prosperity of Christ and His Church; but they exhort, and would have all others to join herein with them, that as God is all in all, so He may of all and by all be praised and glorified. 2. We see the contrary disposition of the godly and wicked; that which is matter of joy to the one is of sorrow to the other, and on the contrary; which was seen at Christ's birth or first coming, and shall beat His record. 3. By the denouncing of a woe to the inhabitants of the earth, we see when it shall be well with the godly then it shall be woe to the wicked. 4. Whereas it is said that the devil was come down to them in great wrath, we see—(1) Who is the author of all unjust wrath and malice. (2) As they who serve God get His loving favour, but they who are Satan's slaves get nothing but his wrath as their recompense in the end; being first their tempter, next their accuser, and at last their tormentor. 5. It is said that he comes in great wrath, because his time is short; which, as it is a comfort to the godly, so it should be a lesson of wisdom: as he is

busy in doing ill, so should they be in doing good, because their time is short here, yea, and most uncertain. (*William Guild, D.D.*) **Woe to the inhabitants of the earth.**—*Woe on the earth*:—1. Note how dark is the outlook of the Church of Jesus with respect to this present world! We wonder betimes at the smallness of its success, and the hard struggle it ever has for its existence. But why should we wonder? Think of the might of the devil and his angels, of their malignity against it, and how deeply the whole world is in their possession. All that we can do is to work on, like Paul, if that by any means we may “save some.” 2. Note the true source of dislike and hatred to the Church. There be many who think more of anything on earth than of the Church. They may consider it well enough to have its services when they die, but whilst they live they only neglect and despise it, and are only offended and enraged when its claims are passed. They forget that this is the very spirit of the devil. And every one who dislikes, hates, or persecutes the Church and people of God, has in him the devil’s spirit, acts the devil’s will, and is one of the devil’s children. 3. Note what a lesson of rebuke and duty addresses itself to Christians from the devil’s example. He never rests from his murderous endeavours. He stops for no losses, succumbs to no adversities, desists for no hindrances, turns back from no encounters, and surrenders not even to the Almighty’s judgments, so long as he has liberty to act or time in which to operate. Look at the untiring energy of hell for destruction, and learn wisdom for eternal life. 4. Finally, note the pressing need there is to keep ourselves awake and in readiness for the coming of our Lord. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) **The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath.**—*Satan in a rage*:—The text tells us that the shortness of Satan’s opportunity excites his wrath, and we may gather a general rule from this one statement, namely, that in proportion as the devil’s time is shortened his energy is increased, and we may take it as an assured fact that when he rages to the uttermost his opportunities are nearly over. He hath great wrath, knowing that his time is short. I hope there will be something of instruction in this, and somewhat of comfort for all those who are on the right side. Now, what is true on a great scale is true in the smaller one. Missionaries in any country will generally find that the last onslaught of heathenism is the most ferocious. We will find, whenever the truth comes into contact with falsehood, that when error is driven to its last entrenchments it fights for life, tooth and nail, with all its might; its wrath is great because its time is short. The same truth, will apply to every individual man. When God begins His great work in a sinner’s heart, to lead him to Christ, it is no bad sign if the man feels more hatred to God than ever, more dislike to good things than before: nor need we despair if he is driven into greater sin. The ferocity of the temptation indicates the vigour with which Satan contends for any one of his black sheep. He will not lose his subjects if he can help it, and so he puts forth all his strength to keep them under his power. The general fact is further illustrated in the cases of many believers. There are times when in the believer’s heart the battle rages horribly, when he hardly knows whether he is a child of God at all, and is ready to give up all hope. He cannot pray or praise, for he is so distracted; he cannot read the Scriptures without horrible thoughts. It seems as if he must utterly perish, for no space is given him in which to refresh his heart, the attacks are so continual and violent. Such dreadful excitements are often followed by years of peace, quiet usefulness, holiness, and communion with God. Satan knows that God is about to set a limit to his vexations of the good man, and so he rages extremely because his opportunity is short. **I. How DOES SATAN KNOW WHEN HIS TIME IS SHORT IN A SOUL?** He watches over all souls that are under his power with incessant maliciousness. He goeth about the camp like a sentinel, spying out every man who is likely to be a deserter from his army. 1. He perceives that his time is short, and I suppose he perceives it first by discovering that he is not quite so welcome as he used to be. The man loved sin, and found pleasure in it, but now sin is not so sweet as it was, its flavour is dull and insipid. The charms of vice are fading, and its pleasures are growing empty, vain, and void, and this is a token of a great change. The adversary perceives that he must soon stretch his dragon wings when he sees that the heart is growing weary of him and is breaking away from his fascinations. 2. He grows more sure of his speedy ejection when he does not get the accommodation he used to have. The man was once eager for sin, he went in the pursuit of vice, hunted after it, and put himself in the way of temptation, and then Satan reigned securely; but now he begins to forsake the haunts where sin walks openly, and he abandons the cups of excitement which inflame the soul. 3. One thing more always makes Satan know that his time is short, and that is when the Holy Spirit’s power is evidently at work within the mind. Light has come in,

and the sinner sees and knows what he was ignorant of before: Satan hates the light as much as he loves the darkness, and like an owl in the daylight he feels that he is out of place. Joyful tidings for a heart long molested by this fierce fiend! Away, thou enemy, thy destructions shall soon come to a perpetual end! II. Inasmuch as the shortness of his tenure excites the rage of Satan, we must next observe HOW HE DISPLAYS HIS GREAT WRATH. His fury rages differently in different persons. On some he displays his great wrath by stirring up outward persecution. The man is not a Christian yet, he is not actually converted yet, but Satan is so afraid that he will be saved that he sets all his dogs upon him directly. The devil will lose nothing through being behind. He begins as soon as ever grace begins. Now, if the grace of God be not in the awakened man, and his reformation is only a spasm of remorse, it is very likely that he will be driven back from all attendance upon the means of grace by the ribald remarks of the ungodly, but if the Lord Jesus Christ has really been knocking at his door, and the Spirit of God has begun to work, this opposition will not answer its purpose. Much worse, however, is the devil's other method of showing his wrath, namely, by vomiting floods out of his mouth to drown, if possible, our new-born hope. When the hopeful hearer as yet has not really found peace and rest, it will sometimes happen that Satan will try him with doubts and blasphemies, and temptations such as he never knew before. The tempted one has been amazed and has said to himself, "How is this? Can my desire after Christ be the work of God? I get worse and worse. I never felt so wicked as this till I began to seek a Saviour." Yet this is no strange thing, fiery though the trial be. At such time, also, Satan will often arouse all the worst passions of our nature, and drive them into unwonted riot. The awakened sinner will be astonished as he finds himself beset with temptations more base and foul than he has ever felt before. He will resist and strive against the assault, but it may be so violent as to stagger him. He can scarcely believe that the flesh is so utterly corrupt. The man who is anxiously seeking to go to heaven seems at such a time as if he were dragged down by seven strong demons to the eternal deeps of perdition. He feels as if he had never known sin before, nor been so completely beneath its power. The Satanic troopers sleep as a quiet garrison while the man is under the spell of sin, but when once the heart is likely to be captured by Immanuel's love the infernal soldiery put on their worst manner, and trample down all the thoughts and desires of the soul. Satan may also attack the seeker in another form, with fierce accusations and judgments. He does not accuse some men, for he is quite sure of them, and they are his very good friends; but when a man is likely to be lost to him, he alters his tone and threatens and condemns. III. HOW ARE WE TO MEET ALL THIS? How must Satan be dealt with while he is showing his great wrath because his power is short? 1. I should say, first, if he is putting himself in this rage, let us get him out all the more quickly. If he would remain quiet even then we ought to be anxious to be rid of his foul company, but if he shows this great rage let us out with him straightaway. 2. And the next thing is, inasmuch as we cannot get him out by our own unaided efforts, let us cry to the strong for strength, who can drive out this prince of the power of the air. There is life in a look at Jesus Christ, and as soon as that life comes away goes this prince of darkness as to his domination and reigning power. 3. One more comfort for you, and it is this—the more he rages the more must your poor, troubled heart be encouraged to believe that he will soon be gone. I venture to say that nothing will make him go sooner than your full belief that he has to go. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 16. *The earth helped the woman.*—*The help of the earth:*—I. SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS HELP. How the earth has rendered help to God's people sometimes by—1. Its wide extent. The primeval going forth of Abram, the father of the faithful, from Ur of the Chaldees, was in all probability owing to the discomfort, distress, and may be actual danger, for one who had renounced idolatry as he had, should he live any longer in an idolatrous land. And so he went far away westward into the land God showed him. And the Exodus was another going forth into a far-off land, that the people might worship God as they could not do in Egypt. Pharaoh would not let the people go, but God compelled him, and the colonisation of Palestine by Israel, and all that followed from that, was the result. 2. The division of the earth into separate states and kingdoms has been another great help to the Church of God in her days of distress. Egypt was a refuge for the infant Christ when Herod would have put Him to death. One of the most awful results of the wide-spread Roman Empire was that its law—which in its evil days was but the will of the reigning emperor, and he too

often one of the vilest of men—ran everywhere, and shut off all retreat from its oppression. Its agents met the fugitive on every shore, till the world became one vast prison-house for the oppressed. The shattering, therefore, of that empire, and its division into separate states, were a vast relief for mankind, of which the Church of God often took advantage in her days of trouble. That the rule of that red dragon, like Herod, could not pass beyond the limits of Judæa, was a blessing that Joseph and the mother of our Lord were quick to avail themselves of by fleeing into Egypt. And what a thrilling story of the earth's helping the people of God has been the result of—3. The earth's varied surface and form. From the days when David clambered up the rocky steep of the mountains of Judæa, and hid himself from Saul in inaccessible caves and fastnesses, in secret places on the mountain sides, and amid their frost-covered summits—places known only to himself and his trusty followers—from those days right down to the days when the Waldenses and the Christians of Piedmont found shelter from the murderous might of Papal Rome—more fierce and dragon-like than even Pagan Rome—amid Alpine snows and crags and cliffs, whither the blood-stained hand of their adversaries could not reach them, though they often tried. Well did the earth's mountain fortresses help God's people then. Nor may we overlook—4. The earth's natural phenomena. The ten plagues of Egypt were but intensified forms of such phenomena, as any one resident long enough in that ancient land will know. The dividing of the Red Sea was by "a strong east wind." The defeat of the Spanish Armada, like the pestilence which slew the Assyrian army that threatened Hezekiah and his city and people—what were these but earth's phenomena, bidden of God to go to the help of His people, as assuredly they did? And how often have—5. The politics of earth been used in a similar way. In 303 A.D., an edict was passed, requiring Christians to deliver up their sacred books under pain of death. This was speedily followed by another, dooming all Christian ministers to prison. And that was immediately followed by a third, authorising the inflicting on them the most savage tortures, unless they would sacrifice to the heathen gods. In the year 304, a fourth edict was issued, ordering the magistrates to force all Christians to offer sacrifices to the gods, and to employ all sorts of torment if they refused. But relief was at hand. In the year 306 Constantine rose to power, and soon after to imperial power. In the year 313 liberty was proclaimed to the Christians, "and in the year 324 the Emperor publicly declared himself a Christian." Thus did the great earthly power of Rome help the people of God by swallowing up for ever the pagan and long-persisted-in persecution, which had been designed to overwhelm them in its full, fierce-flowing flood. 6. Nor have the passions of earth played an unimportant part in this same helping of God's people. God "maketh the wrath of man to praise Him"; and not man's wrath only, but his avarice, and at times even baser passions still. As when that sensual Persian tyrant, for the sake of Esther, hurled down the party of Haman and exalted that of Mordecai. And our own English Henry the Eighth leaned not a little towards the reformed faith because by means of it the beautiful woman he desired might more readily become his. And what a sad and deplorable part did the lust after the Church lands play in persuading the peerage and gentry of that age to pull down the old Church and put up the new. Granted well-nigh all that can be said against that old Church and for the new, still the dark fact remains that avarice and greed were the governing motives of not a few. And that wild outburst of a nation's rage, known as the French Revolution, how that availed to put down the cruelties of the Inquisition, and all those tortures whereby the Church of Rome had been wont to force men to acknowledge her sway. And finally—7. The men of this world—such as the apostle speaks of as "earthly" and worse—then the very children of earth have once and again helped the children of God, the chosen of the Lord. Even Pilate wanted to. And what a list of like unspiritual, worldly men, who yet have proved friends of Christ, the apostolic records furnish—Gallio, Lysias, Festus, Felix, Agrippa, and the centurions and officers of the guard, who were kind to Paul, and stood between him and his enemies. And it has been so ever since. In the life of Lord Shaftesbury, we find him frequently telling how, in one and another of his benevolent but at that time most difficult enterprises, he was helped far more by those who made no profession of religion at all than by not a few of those who did. And to-day, do we not know many who refuse the Christian creed but who will yet do Christian deeds and help Christians therein? And the reason is that God has implanted in man Conscience, the instinctive love of justice and goodness,

and hatred of injustice and oppression; and because the Church appeals to these principles she often gets the good will of worldly men, and their practical help and sympathy. II. **SOME TEACHINGS OF THIS HELP.** 1. How inevitably it will be needed. God's faithful people being what they are, and Satan being what he is, how can it but be that he should persecute the Church of God? 2. It will surely be forthcoming. All men and all material agencies are ministers of God for good to His people, if He pleases to make them so. And He will do this if need arise. 3. How blessed to be of the number of those for whom God will do this. It is His faithful Church, His true people, for whom He will do this. Are we of their number? (*S. Conway, B.A.*) *Nature serving Christianity*:—I. BY ITS GRAND REVELATIONS. 1. There is God. All nature proclaims not only His existence, but His personality, unity, spirituality, wisdom, goodness, power. 2. There is law. 3. There is mediation. 4. There is responsibility. 5. There is mystery. II. BY ITS MORAL IMPRESSIONS. 1. Sense of dependence. 2. Reverence. 3. Contrition. 4. Worship. III. BY ITS MULTIPLIED INVENTIONS. 1. Merchandise. 2. Press. 3. Painting. 4. Music. 5. Government. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Science and the Church*:—The "woman" mentioned here is a symbol of the New Testament Church. She is represented as pursued by the devil, who ejects from his mouth a river of water after her. Just then the earth opens; the deluge is swallowed up; so the woman is saved. Hence we catch from so rapidly fitting a vision at least as much as this welcome proposition: Nature is on the side of genuine religion; science is ready now to be helpful to the Church when it needs succour. I. Hence it might be wise for us, in the first place, to allude to the somewhat ungenerous way in which the woman has been treating the earth in modern times. There is a violence of prejudice in the minds of a great many of God's people which is almost inexplicable. From the outset they suspect all offers of help from the world of natural research. Now the day has passed for a mere show of bigotry. Whoever considers that his opinions are settled beyond modification is simply a conceited or obstinate debater. Now if skilled philosophers have to be modest in dealing with each other, how much more wary ought the rank and file of mere theologians to be! For they are a class of scholars who do not claim to be experts in the details of the material sciences. Is it not time that religious people recognise the lapse of time and the growth of ages? Some things have come to light which Turretin and Luther and Calvin did not know, or they very likely would never have written what they did. The true prudence for us all would be to welcome aid in any difficult field of labour, no matter whence it comes. A fact is a fact, as a diamond is a diamond, and both are valuable; and it would be sheer waste of time to inquire jealously the colour of the first searcher who found either. There was a day when the gold and silver of Pharaoh's people went into the heaps of money contributed for building the tabernacle of God in the wilderness; there need be no fear but that all the discoveries of every science in turn, as soon as they have become fixed and tabulated by scientists themselves, will range their valuable brightness where they can best beautify the temple of God's Word. II. Now let us seek some few of the forms of actual help which natural science of every sort has already furnished, thus exhibiting its real friendliness. 1. To begin with, let us consider its answer to what have been termed the "unconscious prophecies" of the Bible. 2. In the second place, the Church has occasion to thank science for its help in giving a constant rebuke to impertinent cavils which petulant objectors are in the habit of urging. Voltaire founded an argument against the truthfulness of the Old Testament upon what he termed the ignorant mistakes of the writer who composed the various books. Among these he instanced the expression of Solomon in the Proverbs, "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the glass." Now, said this witty Frenchman, Solomon could not have been the wise man he was reputed to be, or else he would have been fully informed that glass was not known as a substance until long after he was dead; it was invented subsequent to the date of his somewhat fragmentary book. Now science stepped into the controversy, not precisely for the Bible's sake in that sceptical age, but for its own. Chronology settled that Solomon lived about 1004 B.C. Then a historian proved that glass was in use among the Egyptians far before that time, for he had found pictures of glass-blowing in the ruins of the temples sculptured on the stone slabs. Archæology followed with an exhibition of a glass signet engraved with a monarch's name, and dated 1500 B.C.; this was discovered in ancient Thebes. And to this there was added the fact, announced by the expedition just returning from Egypt, that there were glass beads

buried with the mummies they began to unroll. At this moment also came in philology to say that Solomon had not in fact mentioned the name of glass at all in his proverb; the original Hebrew word meant "cup," a mere drinking-vessel of any material; the wise man had warned against wine "when it giveth its colour in the cup." Thus, again, four distinct sciences in turn took up the contemptible little cavil and silenced it. It seems a waste of energy; but this has often been the result of such a demonstration. 3. Once more: consider science as exemplifying its friendliness for the Church in the illustration of difficult doctrines which it furnishes. It does not matter where we seek for examples. The resurrection of the body, perhaps one of the doctrines of the New Testament the most mysterious, was quite a fresh revelation to the world at large. It is a hard matter of belief to many a perplexed mind now. But it is no harder than the mystery of a tree's growth from the seed; and this is the figure which the Apostle Paul used for his help in explaining it. There are reserves in science into which the all-wise Creator retires as He does in revelation. 4. In the fourth place, let us be ready to acknowledge the help we receive in the reconciliation which science offers concerning the paradoxes of reason and faith in the Scriptures. We find in the revealed Word the statement that our Maker is "the Light of the world." Vivid indeed is the illustration offered by optical science just at this point. Here are three primary colours entering in to produce perfect white—the blue, the yellow, and the red. The natural philosopher places before our eyes a broad disk of metal; he paints on it segments of colour in due proportion, running from circumference to centre and ending at a point; then he whirls the disk like a wheel on its axis; the colours disappear, and the metal shines whiter than a silver shield. We cannot understand it; but the fact is the three elements have blended into one whole: three are one, and one is three. Then the lecturer tells us that the red gives off all the heat in the sun's ray, the yellow spreads all the illumination, the blue effects the chemical changes in living organisms. He says we read by the yellow ray, but we should shiver without the red, and we should wither and die without the blue. They are all needed as colours, and they all work together as one beam of sunlight. Now it is not contended that this is an explanation of the Scriptural doctrine of the trinity of God's being; but this we do insist upon: whenever cavillers demand scientific reasoning, because they cannot believe what they do not understand, it does seem as if we might wait for them to play their little arithmetical puzzles about three are one and one is three off upon the spectrum before they try them on the Trinity. And we go a single step farther. We cannot help thinking, in view of such astonishing analogies, that it must have been infinite wisdom which said, "God is light." 5. Finally, let us consider the friendliness of science as manifested in the positive help which it offers in the interpretation of obscure passages in the Word itself. Think of the helpfulness of Layard's discoveries at Nineveh to the students in explaining the books of Jonah and Nahum. So of the other forgotten cities and empires; we are to read concerning the fall of Tyre, the overthrow of Egypt, the extinction of Edom, the destruction of Babylon, in the light of late investigations of the ruins in those lands, all made in the interest of science. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The earth helps the woman*:—The names of worldly-minded subscribers to religious societies prove how greatly the earth helps the woman. (*W. Wayte Andrew, M.A.*) *The dragon. . . went to make war with the remnant*.—*War against the remnant*:—1. We see that the dragon's wrath against the woman breaks out in war: which shows us, that even so wrath or any sin harboured in the heart, will at last break forth in action. Cain. 2. We see who is the principal author of the bloody wars and massacres that have been in sundry nations. 3. It is said that he went to make war with the remnant of her seed: to show us hereby the insatiable blood-thirstiness of Satan and his instruments: who, when they had killed the Lord's witnesses and so many more, yet cannot rest till in like manner they have killed the remnant. 4. This seed of the woman is described from keeping of the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ: by this mark, therefore, let us try ourselves if we be of this number who are the members of Christ's true Church; to wit, if we hold fast the profession of the truth constantly, and make our practice or conversation conform thereunto. (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VERS. 1-18. A beast rise up out of the sea.—*The domain of antichrist*:—I. **IT HAS A MANIFOLD DEVELOPMENT.** In the commerce of the world, in the government of the world, in the campaigns of the world, in the literature of the world, in the religions of the world, antichrist appears in aspects as hideous, and in a spirit as savage and blasphemous as the monsters depicted in this vision. II. **IT HAS ONE MASTER-SPIRIT.** 1. He is endowed with tremendous power. 2. His grand pursuit is moral mischief. He promotes—(1) Blasphemy; (2) Deception; (3) Destruction. He has no fight with fiends, but with saints. 3. His sphere is co-extensive with the world. Wherever falsehood, dishonesty, impurity, revenge are, there he is. And where are they not? 4. However great his influence, he is under a restraining law. 5. His mission will ultimately prove self-ruinous. In every act the devil performs, he is forming a link in that adamant chain that shall bind him, not merely for a thousand years, but for ever. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The two wild beasts; or, the world and its wisdom*:—I. **THE ANTICHRISTIAN WORLD** answers to the first of the wild beasts of which we here read. See the resemblance. Rome and Nero's were not more exact. 1. It has assumed successive forms. "Seven heads" we read of, and they denote the multiplication and succession of hostile powers arrayed against the Church of God. 2. And it has ever had immense strength. "Ten horns," and these encircled with diadems, telling how the world-spirit has ever made use of the princes and potentates of earth to work its will. 3. And it has ever raged against the Church as a wild beast. Under all its forms it has hated the people of God. From Pharaoh even to the last of the persecutors it has been the same. 4. And its deadly wounds heal (ver. 3). If its dominion be overthrown in a given locality, or in your heart, do we not know how the evil spirit, who has left for a while, comes back? 5. It is popular. "All the world wondered after," and "worshipped." 6. And it blasphemes still. It claims Divine power. 7. And it wages war and wins (ver. 7). Let families, Churches, congregations, tell how this war has been waged in their midst, and how some, often many, of their most hopeful members have fallen. 8. And none but those who are really Christ's withstand (ver. 6). Yes, we are sent forth as sheep amid wolves. II. **THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD** answers to the second "beast." St. James tells us that "this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." This monster (ver. 11) is seen to ascend from "the earth," as St. James tells. In chap. xix. 20 it is called the "false prophet." 1. It is said to have "deceived." It deceives—(1) By its innocent appearance, its lamb-like look. True, it had ten horns, but they meant nothing, so small, so slight, so incapable of injury. So this wisdom. No one would ever suspect it of being a fierce beast. It is known as modern thought, science, philosophy, liberal culture—lamb-like words whom none would suspect to harbour ill. (2) By its words, so subtle and serpentine. "He spake as a dragon," that is, as a serpent, as did the "old serpent." So this wisdom of the world is plausible, popular, prevalent. But it further deceives—(3) By its "lying wonders" (ver. 14). The juggleries and tricks of heathenism, its magic and sorcery, explain St. John's words. Have not most eminent names, most wonderful discoveries, most famous reputations, been amongst the rewards it has given? 2. Its falsity may be detected. See, then—(1) It is an alliance with the God-defying world (cf. vers. 12-15). Mere brute force could not get on without the tricks and frauds which this lamb-like, lying thing concocts and displays. The first beast would be powerless without the cunning of the second. And here is a test for us. Do we find that any set of opinions, any new beliefs and maxims we may have adopted, are such as the godless and antichristian world choose and cherish as of great advantage to them? Can they claim them as on their side? If so, that is a very suspicious fact. (2) It transforms you into the world's likeness (see ver. 16). On the forehead or on the right hand the mark of this beast was to be. (*S. Conway, B.A.*) His deadly wound was healed.—*His deadly wound was healed*:—Who would have suspected this inference from these premises? But is not this the lively emblem of my natural corruption? Sometimes I conceive that, by God's grace, I have conquered and killed, subdued and slain, maimed and mortified the deeds of the flesh: never more shall I be molested or buffeted with such a bosom sin: when, alas! by the next return the news is, it is revived and recovered. Thus tenches, though grievously gashed, presently plaster themselves whole by that slimy and unctuous humour they have in them;

and thus the inherent balsam of badness quickly cures my corruption—not a scar to be seen. I perceive I shall never finally kill it, till first I be dead myself. (Thomas Fuller, D.D.) All the world wondered after the beast.—*Admiration of the beast*:—Can you not hear the words coming across all these centuries from the lips of two Roman youths, talking with each other, as they lounge together in the Forum? They had noble thoughts once; they had heard of the deeds of their fathers; they had dreamed that there might be some possible good for their age. But they had become sottish, licentious, gamblers. And one more gigantically sottish, licentious, gambling than themselves has become their ideal of what is desirable and possible. Who is like to him? Who can make war with him? These two youths fairly represent the age on which they have fallen. There is no originality in them. They think what every one else thinks. Their private opinion is the public opinion of the city and of the world. (F. D. Maurice, M.A.)

Vers. 7, 8. To make war with the saints.—*War with the saints*:—Observe—1. A war proclaimed; the beast makes war upon the saints, by bloodshed and persecution, and by the force of those weapons overcomes them; that is to outward appearance and in the opinion of the world. But really do the saints overcome him by their patience under sufferings, and by adhering to the truth. 2. The large extent of the beast's power that was given him, namely, over all kindreds, tongues, and nations. Christ's flock is a little flock, compared with antichrist's herd: how wrong a note then is multitude of the right Church? 3. That as the power of the beast is universal, so is the worship also. "All that dwell on the earth shall worship him." 4. We have a number excepted, "Whose names are written in the book of life." Christ has His number of faithful ones, who are not defiled by antichrist's pollutions; a number whose conversations are in heaven. 5. The title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, He is styled "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (W. Burkitt, M.A.) The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.—*Christ sacrificed in eternity*:—I. THE THINGS THAT ARE TO HAPPEN IN THE UNIVERSE IN THE MOST DISTANT FUTURE ARE TO GOD AS FACTS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED. 1. God's intelligence is infinite. 2. God's purposes are unfrustrable. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE IS AN ETERNAL PRINCIPLE IN THE CREATION. 1. It is the root of the universe. 2. It is typified in all material existences. 3. It agrees with the moral constitution of the soul, which is so formed—(1) That it can recognise nothing as morally praiseworthy that does not spring from it. (2) Its conscience can approve of no act of its own that is not inspired by it. (3) Its happiness can be realised only as it is controlled by it. III. REDEMPTION IS NO AFTERTHOUGHT IN THE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSE. IV. OUR PLANET WAS PROBABLY FORMED FOR THE SPECIAL PURPOSE OF BECOMING THE THEATRE OF GOD'S REDEPTIVE LOVE TO MAN. Small in bulk as our planet is, compared with that of other orbs that roll in splendour under the eye of God, it has a grand moral distinction. Its dust formed, its fruit fed the body of the Son of God. Here He lived, laboured, suffered, and was buried, and here His grand work is being carried on. If it be moral facts that give importance to places, is there a more important spot than this earth? (D. Thomas, D.D.) *Eternal atonement*:—The prevalent opinion no doubt has been that the atonement is simply an historic fact, dating back now some fourteen hundred years; and that only the purpose of it is eternal. But Johann Wessel, the great German theologian, who died only six years after Martin Luther was born, got hold of the idea that not election only, but atonement also is an eternal act. And this, it seems to me, is both rational and Scriptural. Eternal election, profoundly considered, requires eternal atonement for its support. Both are eternal, as all Divine realities are eternal. And so the relationship of God to moral evil stands forth as an eternal relationship. Not that evil is itself eternal; but God always knew it and always felt it. It may help our thinking in this direction to remember that there is a sense in which creation itself is eternal; not independently eternal, but, of God's will, dependently eternal. There must nothing be said, or thought, in mitigation of the ethical verdict against moral evil. The hatefulness of it, no matter what its chronology may be, is simply unspeakable. Wrong doing is the one thing nowhere, and never, to be either condoned or endured. Nor should any attempt be made to get at the genesis of moral evil. The beginning of it is simply inconceivable. The whole thing is a mystery, and must be let alone. Moral evil is not eternal; or there would be two infinities. Nor is it a creature of God; or God would be divided against Himself. And yet it had the Divine permission, whatever that

may be imagined to have been. Practically, historic sin finds relief in historic redemption. Apparently, there was little, if any, interval between the two. But the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world suggests a far sublimer theodicy. We are taken back behind the human ages, behind all time, into awful infinite depths, into the very bosom of the Triune God. Trinity is another name for the self-consciousness, and self-communion of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are vastly more than the revelation of God to man; they are the revelation of God to Himself, and the intercourse of God with Himself. They suggest infinite fullness and richness of being. Our scientific definitions of God do not amount to much. What we need is to see God in the life, both of nature and of man. God creates, governs, judges, punishes, redeems, and saves; but love is the root of all. This yearning, grieved, and suffering God is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Son of God, Son of Mary. This sinless child should have had no sins of His own. His sorrows could have been only those old eternal shadows of permitted sin. The Cross on which He died, flinging out its arms as if to embrace the world, lifted up its head toward the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Our hearts now go back to Calvary; and from Calvary they go up to God. One word more. This stupendous idea of eternal atonement carries with it the idea of universal atonement. Whatever it was, and is, it must needs have been infinite. No magnitude of sin, no multitude of sinners, can bankrupt its treasury of grace. "God so loved the world," is its everlasting refrain. "He that will, let him take the water of life freely." (R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.)

The Lamb slain:—I. THE DESIGNATION here given to the Saviour. He is called "the Lamb." This is a most appropriate title, since we look upon a lamb as the emblem of innocence, gentleness, and submission; qualities of goodness in which the blessed Redeemer was pre-eminent, and fairer than the children of men.

II. THE SLAUGHTER. "The Lamb slain." The slaughtered Lamb was a prominent element in the Jewish ritual, and a standing type of the Lamb of God, whose obedience unto death procured the life of the world. There were three remarkable instances of this under the Old Testament dispensation. The first is the case of Abraham in offering his son Isaac. St. Paul tells us that this was a figure of the death and resurrection of Christ. The second distinct instance of the typical allusion, is the paschal lamb. This is shown by the observation of St. Paul, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." The third instance in which this animal is used as a type of Christ was on the daily sacrifice.

III. THE DATE of this transaction—"from the foundation of the world." How is this to be understood? 1. He was slain in the purpose of God. Contingency with man is certainty with God. Purpose and accomplishment are the same with Him. 2. Not only in purpose but in type is the doctrine true. 3. He was so in effect. (*American National Preacher.*)

The place of the Cross in the world:—The Lamb is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world. It was not the result of an accident; it was not the result of an emergency; it was something involved in the plan of the creation itself—a design of its being. Its first stone was laid with a view to the development of the sacrificial life. Was St. John, then, an optimist, or a pessimist? In the worldly sense of these words he was something different from either, and something which admitted a truth in both. On the one hand he holds with the worldly optimist that all things do work for the highest good; the universe is to him the product of love. But on the other hand, just because it is the product of love, he could never admit that it is a field for self-gratification. He found in it a sphere that, from the beginning to the end of the day, disappointed every selfish hope, wrecked every ship that sailed only for its own cargo. And why so? Because to him the essence of God was love. If God be love, the highest good must be to be made in the image of love. St. John asked himself how that could be done on the Greek principle of self-indulgence, or the Jewish principle of a physical Messiah. He felt that if the end of life were simply to wear purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and if life itself were amply suited to such an end, then life was incompatible with love. This world, in short, is to St. John a development and an upward development; but it is a development of self-sacrifice. The Apocalypse has been called a sensuous book; it is to my mind the least sensuous book in the Bible. It describes the process of the ages as a process of self-surrender. This, then, is the meaning of the passage, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." It means that Christ was all along the goal of creation, and that all creation is a making for Christ. More particularly, it means that the line of

this world's progress has been a development of self-sacrifice. It seems to me that in this last point the writer of the Apocalypse has come nearer to a philosophy of history than all who went before him. If you take any other line of progress you will fail, in my opinion, to prove that there has been an advance in the march from the old to the new. Shall we take intellect? Do we feel that the amount of mind force is greater in the modern Englishman than it was in the ancient Greek? It would be difficult to feel it, and it would be impossible to prove it: are Plato and Aristotle inferior to the best intellects among us? Shall we take imagination? Have we reached the architectural conception which planned the pyramids? Have we outrun the triumphs of Greek sculpture? Have we surpassed the poetry of Homer? Have we sustained the fame of the mediæval painters? Have you ever considered how much of invention is itself due to the spread of the unselfish principle? Why have the great ages of discovery been the ages after Christ? Is it not just because Christ has been before them? Is it not because the spirit of sacrifice has awakened man to the wants of man? The times of self-seeking were not the times of invention. St. John says creation is moving toward a type—a lamb slain, and it is moving toward that type in a straight line—the line of sacrifice. It is climbing to its goal by successive steps which might be called steps downward—increasing limitations of the self-life. To what extent did St. John see this? He saw in visible nature a series of gospel pictures; everything seemed to live only by losing itself. He saw the waves of the sea of Patmos passing into waves of light; he beheld the waves of light passing into eddies of the sea. It seemed to him that even in that lonely spot God had inscribed upon the walls of nature the image of a cross. By and by, before the eyes of the seer there flashed a higher order of creation, and it was clothed in the same garb—the robe of sacrifice. He passed from the pictorial representation of sacrifice in nature to its actual, though involuntary, representation in animal life. The very reference to a slain lamb is a reference to an animal sacrifice. How did St. John reconcile himself to that spectacle of an involuntary sacrifice of the animal life prescribed by the Old Testament? He said it was a type of Christ. If sacrifice be the law of the highest being, it is desirable to reach it. You can only reach anything by a repeated experience of it. There passed before him the natural sacrifices of the human heart. I believe that the cares of the heart prevent every man from living the full amount of his natural years. What is the difference, then, between the sacrifice of the animal and the sacrifice of the man? It is an inward difference; the obligatory has become the voluntary. What has made it voluntary? It is love, a force to which in the animal world nothing exactly corresponds, a force which adds to the sacrifice, and at the same time helps to bear it. And yet merely natural love is far from having reached the goal. It is noble; it is beautiful; but it is not the topmost triumph. The mother's love, the brother's love, the husband's love, the son and daughter's love, are each and all the search for something kindred to ourselves. St. John looks out for a vaster type—a love that can come where there is no kindred, no sympathy. He seeks a love that shall strive for the survival of the unfittest—the blood of a spotless soul that can wash the sins of the absolutely impure. This is to John the perfect type of altruism—the Lamb that was slain. It is the progress towards this type that constitutes to St. John the philosophy of history. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. *He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity.*—*Retribution on the enemies of the Church*:—Observe here—1. That this acclamation, "If any man have an ear, let him hear," is added in Scripture when something required a spiritual understanding to discern the meaning. Let him consider what is here revealed concerning this beast, and take heed that he be not found amongst the number of the worshippers of it. 2. The consolation here given to the saints from the consideration of God's just retribution to His and their enemies, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity," that is, the beast who has brought many of the saints into captivity shall himself at length be taken captive (chap. xix. 20). With what measure antichrist metes to others it shall be measured to him again; God has as many ways to hurt His Church's enemies as they have to hurt His people. 3. The end and design of God in suffering antichrist's rage to break forth against the Church; it is for the trial of the Church's faith and patience. Note—(1) That none can stand under or bear up under sufferings like saints. (2) That under great sufferings saints themselves will have great occasion for the exercise of faith and patience. (3) That the faith and patience of the saints will be

made very conspicuous by great and sharp sufferings. (4) That faith and patience must accompany each other in suffering times. Patience is the soul's shoulder to bear what is afflictive at present: faith is the Christian's eye to discover a glorious deliverance to come; where no patience is it is a token of no faith; and where no faith is there will appear great impatience. Behold, then, the faith and patience of the saints. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **Another beast coming up out of the earth.**—*The second beast*:—The antichrist, though an individual, is not alone. He not only has the ten sovereignties working into his hand with all "their power and strength," but he has a more intimate and more potent companion, hardly less remarkable than himself, duplicating his power, and without whom he could not be what he is. This second beast has "two horns like a lamb." Horns are the symbols of power; but these horns have no diadems, and are like the horns of a gentle domestic animal. Political sovereignty, war, conquest, and the strength of military rule are therefore out of the question here. This beast is a spiritual teacher, and not a king or warrior. His power has a certain softness and domesticity about it, which is sharply distinguished from the great, regal horns of the first beast, although in reality of the same wild beast order, and belonging to the same dragon brood. What, then, are we to understand by these two lamblike horns or the twofold power of this beast? Taking the whole history of all religions, true and false, from the beginning until now, and searching for the elements of their hold on men's minds, their power, it will be found to reside in two things, which, in the absence of better terms, we may call naturalism and supernaturalism, that is, the presence of revelations, or what are accepted as revelations, from the superior powers, and held to be Divine and binding; or conclusions of natural conscience and reason, deemed sacredly obligatory because believed to be good and true. It is difficult to conceive on what other foundation a religion can rest; and analysis will show that on one or the other of these, or on both combined, all religions do rest, and must rest. Here is the seat of their strength, their power, whether true or false, the horns by which they push their way to dominion over the hearts and lives of men. They are just two, and no more. As a religionist, therefore, this beast-prophet could have but two horns. But he has two horns, and hence both the two only powers in a religion; therefore he is at once a naturalist and a supernaturalist—a scientist and a spiritualist—a rationalist, yet asserting power above ordinary nature and in command of nature. In other words, he claims to be the bearer of the sum total of the universal wisdom, in which all reason and all revelation are fused into one great system, claimed to be the ultimatum of all truth, the sublime and absolute universeology. And professing to have everything natural and supernatural thus solved and crystallised as the one eternal and perfect wisdom, he must necessarily present himself as the one absolute apostle and teacher of all that ought to command the thought, faith, and obedience of man. The same helps to a right idea of the further particular concerning this beast, to wit, that, though having but the two horns like a lamb, he yet speaks like a dragon. He is lamblike in that he proposes to occupy only the mild, domestic, and inoffensive position of spiritual adviser. What more gentle and innocent than the counselling of people how to live and act for the securement of their happiness! But the words are like the dragon, in that such professions and claims are in fact the assumption of absolute dominion over the minds, souls, consciences, and hearts of men to bind them irrevocably, and to compel them to think and act only as he who makes them shall dictate and prescribe. Only to the eternal God belongs such a power; and when claimed by a creature is, indeed, the speech of the devil, the spirit of hell usurping the place and prerogatives of the Holy Ghost. Hence, also, in so far as this beast is able to maintain and enforce these prophetic claims, "he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast." There is no more complete or exalted dominion under the sun than such a sway over the intellect and will of universal humanity. The first beast, in all his imperial power, has no greater authority than the common acknowledgment of such claims would give. When this is exercised all the authority of the first beast is exercised. But the first beast is quite willing that his hellish consociate should assert and press these claims; for the two are but different persons in the same infernal trinity, the second witnessing to the first as the Spirit witnesseth to the Son. And a most efficient minister does this false prophet prove to be. Eight times it is written of him that "he causeth." First, we have the statement that "he causeth the earth and those that dwell in it to worship the first

beast, whose stroke of death was healed." They are induced to accept the beast as the deity, and to worship him as God. It seems like a fable. But, with all the weird strangeness of the record, the literal realisation of it is neither impossible nor improbable. There is nothing in it to which depraved human nature is not competent, and even predisposed and prone. The King of Parthia, kneeling before Nero, said to him, "You are my god, and I am come to adore you as I adore the sun. My destiny is to be determined by your supreme will," to which Nero replied, "I make you King of Armenia, that the whole universe may know it belongs to me to give or to take away crowns." It may be said that these were ancient, pagan, and benighted times, and that such abominations can never again be palmed upon mankind. But they were the times which produced our classics. The same has also occurred in later days with far less reason or apology, and among those who claimed to be the most advanced and enlightened of mortals. How was it in the comparatively recent period of the French Revolution? How was it with those world-renowned *savants*, whose boast was to dethrone the King of heaven as well as the monarchs of the earth? Did they not sing halleluias to the busts of Marat and Lepelletier, not only in the streets of Paris and Brest, but in many of the churches all over France? How came it that Robespierre was named and celebrated as a divinity, a superhuman being, "The New Messiah!" Can we blot out what Alison and Lacretelle and Thiers have written, that "Marat was universally deified," that the churches received his statues as objects of sacred regard, and that a new worship was everywhere set up in their honour? Is it to be ignored how the foremost men of the nation, in state ceremony, conveyed a woman in grand procession to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, unveiled and kissed her before the high altar as the Goddess of Reason, and exhorted the multitude to cease trembling before the powerless thunders of the God of their fears, and "sacrifice only to such as this"? (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) He spake as a dragon.—*Speaking as a dragon*:—The words remind us of the description given by our Lord of those false teachers who "come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." (*W. Milligan, D.D.*) *His speech is as a dragon*:—Not as the former beast—the mouth of a lion, and "speaking great things"—but rather with subtlety and feigned persuasion, as the old serpent in paradise. "For he would not be like a lamb," says Tichonius, "if he spake openly; he feigns Christianity." (*Isaac Williams, B.D.*)

Vers. 13–18. *Deceiveth . . . by the means of those miracles.*—*Miracles: a counterfeit supernaturalism*:—Miracles have ever been the chief evidence of the presence of what is worshipful and Divine. It is by these especially that men's faith is begotten and controlled. It is by seeing and experiencing what is manifestly above and beyond all natural human power, and what cannot be accounted for on natural principles, that the human mind is forced to a conviction of the presence of some great and worshipful potency superior to Nature. And this arch-prophet of falsehood knows well how needful and mighty is the force of miracles to establish his credit, and to secure belief in his claims. The religion of God is a religion of miracles, and to make his infernal deception appear the only true and rightful religion he needs to mimic and counterfeit all that supernaturalism on which the true faith reposes. To this, therefore, he sets himself, and becomes one of the greatest workers of signs and wonders the earth has ever seen. Nor need we be surprised at this. There is a supernatural power which is against God and truth, as well as one for God and truth. A miracle, simply as a work of wonder, is not necessarily of God. There has always been a devilish supernaturalism in the world running alongside of the supernaturalism of Divine grace and salvation. "The magicians of Egypt also did in like manner with their enchantments; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents." Here was devil miracle in imitation of the Divine. The test of a miracle is its supernaturalness; the test of its source is the doctrine, end, or interest for which it is wrought. If in support of anything contrary to God and His revealed will and law, it is no less a miracle; but in that case it is a work of the devil, for God cannot contradict Himself (1 John iv. 1–3). It is also plainly intimated in the Divine Word that, in judgment upon the wicked world for its refusal of Christ, and its setting at naught of all the Divine miracles, the present bonds and limitations of satanic power will be relaxed, the devil and his demons allowed freer range upon this planet, and those in love with falsehood and unrighteousness given over to delusions then so much stronger than ever before (1 Kings xxii. 18, 22; 2 Chron. xviii. 18, 22; Isa. vi. 9, 10; Ezek. xiv. 9; Rom. i. 21, 25, 28; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12). (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. He causeth all . . . to receive a mark.—*Soul-marks*:—The words “he causeth” clearly ascribe this operation to the second beast. If it had been the first we might imagine that some outward mark or sign was meant, for that beast deals with the visible and outward. But this one stamps an image on the souls of men; this writes a name on all their inward thoughts, which afterwards expresses itself in their common daily acts. Men fancy, when they read and talk of some great tyrant-power which has established itself in their country or their age, that they are reading and talking of something which is far off from them. They can comment upon it, measure its effects, calculate the chances of its continuance or of its fall. If any complain of it as bad in its origin or immoral in its practices, wise persons will whisper, “But it does not hurt you. You can buy and sell happily under the shadow of it. Your gains are not seriously lessened. You incur no great risks of loss.” And all the time these wise persons are not aware that they themselves, as well as those with whom they are conversing, have received the mark of this power on their foreheads and their right hands; that the image of it is graven in their hearts; that they are showing in these very discourses of theirs that they bear the name and character of that which they are excusing. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Animalism: the mark of the beast*:—The question that I want to ask is this, Whoever the beast is, what makes him a beast? What is the bestial element in him, whoever he be? And the answer is not far to find, Godless selfishness, that is “the mark of the beast.” Wherever a human nature is self-centred, God-forgetting, and therefore God-opposing (for whoever forgets God defies Him), that nature has gone down below humanity, and has touched the lower level of the brutes. Men are so made as that they must either rise to the level of God, or certainly go down to the level of the brute. And wherever you get men living by their own fancies, for their own pleasure, in forgetfulness and neglect of the sweet and mystic bonds that should knit them to God, there you get “the image of the beast and the number of his name.” And besides that godless selfishness, we may point to simple animalism as literally the mark of the beast. He who lives not by conscience and by faith, but by fleshly inclination and sense, lowers himself to the level of the instinctive brute-life, and beneath it, because he refuses to obey faculties which they do not possess, and what is nature in them is degradation in us. Look at the unblushing sensuality which marks many “respectable people” nowadays. Look at the foul fleshliness of much of popular art and poetry. Look at the way in which pure animal passion, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the love of good things to eat and plenty to drink is swaying and destroying men and women by the thousand among us. Look at the temptations that lie along every street in Manchester for every young man after dusk. Look at the thin veneer of culture over the ugliest lust. Scratch the gentleman and you find the satyr. Is it much of an exaggeration, in view of the facts of English life to-day, to say that all the world wanders after and worships this beast? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The number of his name*.—*The number of the name*:—It is indeed remarkable that the seer should speak at all of “the number” of the name of the beast. Why not be content with the name itself? 1. St. John may not himself have known the name. He may have been acquainted only with the character of the beast, and with the fact, too often overlooked by inquirers, that to that character its name, when made known, must correspond. No reader of St. John’s writings can have failed to notice that to him the word “name” is far more than a mere appellative. It expresses the inner nature of the person to whom it is applied. No man could know the new name written upon the white stone given to him that overcometh “but he that receiveth it.” In other words, no one but a Christian indeed could have that Christian experience which would enable him to understand the “new name.” In like manner now, St. John may have felt that it was not possible for the followers of Christ to know the name of antichrist. But this need not hinder him from giving the number. The “number” spoke only of general character and fate; and knowledge of it did not imply, like knowledge of the “name,” communion of spirit with him to whom the name belonged. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. Six hundred three score and six.—*Sizes and sevens*:—I. THE BEAST WHOSE NUMBER IS 6 6 6. The beast is not one, but three. It is evident the last verse sums up the two chapters, and gives its total number like the answer in an addition sum. 1. The first beast is the “great red dragon” of chap. xii. He has “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” He appears in heaven in open revolt against all authority, and with special enmity against the

man child. Who is this daring, determined fiend who disturbs heaven's peace, and is thirsty for the blood of the saints? In ver. 9 we are told he is "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan." That point is clear enough at any rate; we have heard of him before. 2. The second beast rises up out of the sea, and is Daniel's four beasts (Dan. vii. 1-8) rolled into one. Unto this beast the "great red dragon," the devil, "gave his power, his throne, and great authority." A throne means kingship and a kingdom. He takes up the rebellion against God, heaven, and the saints, and extends his authority over all kindreds and tongues and nations. "The prince of this world." A title thrice given by Jesus Christ to His adversary. 3. The third beast rises up out of the earth, and in many respects differs from its fellow beasts. Instead of being a combination of terrors, it is meek and gentle in its appearance. Its mild and innocent looks are belied by its words, which carry its real character; they are fierce, treacherous, and cruel. This lamb-like dragon has no throne, neither does it rule over conquered peoples. It is the servant of the beast-royal. It is zealous for his honour, wields his authority, works miracles for his glory, makes men worship his image, and rejoices to lose itself in the splendour and glory of its lord. 4. Here, then, we see "the great red dragon," and two beasts, varying in form and sphere of operation, but one in nature and purpose. And their relationship to each other is such as to suggest at once the evangelist's conception of a trinity of evil in deadly conflict with the Divine and holy Trinity of good. II. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS NUMBER 6 6 6? The numbers are signs, and must be taken, not in their literal or numerical value, but in their symbolic sense. They stand for something altogether outside arithmetic. For instance, three is a number of mysterious sanctity, and refers to deities; four represents the earth in all its four corners; and six is everywhere the unlucky number. The Jew dreaded it, and to this day there linger many superstitions about the sixth day (Friday), the sixth hour, &c. The reason given is that it falls fatally below seven, the emblem of completeness, perfection, totality. Six is nearest to seven, but always falls one short of completeness. III. THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE POINT OF ATTAINMENT, APART FROM GOD, IS 6 6 6. This admits that without God six can be reached. In Church life we can do a great deal without God. Crowded Churches and overflowing coffers are no infallible sign of the Divine Presence. In individual reform much can be done without God. I have known men give up drink, gambling, lust, swearing, and almost every form of vice, and reform so completely that they have been held up in "reports" as miracles of grace; and afterwards they have confessed there was no grace in it, they had never prayed, nor sought help from God. Science has wrought wonders in the last fifty years. If any one had told our grandfathers of the achievements of steam and electricity they would have thought him mad. But wonderful as science is, its number is only 6. Coming from America in the *Augusta Victoria*, a clever fellow with whom I had had several talks came up to me on Sunday morning. Seeing I was reading my Bible, he expressed surprise that I read "that book." I told him I was surprised to hear him say so. "Oh!" he said, "the world has grown out of that long since." "Indeed," I replied; "and into what has it grown?" Then he extolled the work of science. And I asked him the simple question, "Whence did you and I come?" And he took me through the mysteries of evolution, performing two or three intellectual somersaults in the course, and at last put his finger on the first form of organic life, and said proudly, "That's where we began!" "Indeed," I said, "and where did it begin?" Then he said, "We come now to what is variously described as the First Cause, Eternal Force, and the Unknowable." "It won't do," I said; "your explanation does not explain." His science was only 6. I turn to my Bible, and I find the missing link. "In the beginning God!" Life has no explanation with Him left out. So long as He is absent the "one thing needful" is lacking. It is the same with philosophy. It is only 6. It needs God to tell me whence I came, what I am, and whither I go. He alone can supply what lies between "6" and "7." The modern gospel without God is only 6. Reform is popular. Politicians of all grades vie with each other in their zeal for the uplifting of society. All this is very well as far as it goes; but its number is only the number of the beast. The gospel of to-day, apart from Christ, is expressed in three words: economics, sanitation, education. I believe in all three. I have been too long in the ranks of the toilers not to sympathise with their struggle for better conditions of work and life. But when you have given the workman the eight-hours day and the living wage, who is going to give him a pair of legs that will carry him past the first public-house? So also with sanitation. By all means let us have clean

dwellings, pure air, and good drains. But good sanitation does not make saints. It is not the sty that makes the pig, but the pig that makes the sty. As a reforming power sanitation is good as far as it goes; but it gets no farther than the skin and the sewer. Its number is only 6. Education touches the man more directly; but experience has amply proved how insufficient it is to effect such radical change in men as will make them just and good. The fact is, this generation has fallen in love with the social conditions of the kingdom of Christ. It has become the great ideal—the age's utopia. But it has not adopted Christ's method to bring it about. It wants a shorter cut. Christ's method is: make men good, and the "new creature" will produce a new social order and a new world. But to make men good is such slow, hopeless work; so we will try making the world good, and then surely men must be good. It did not work in the garden of Eden. Neither will it now. Jesus Christ is still the only Saviour. He will reconstruct society by regenerating the individual; and the host of Christian workers, despised preachers of the gospel, Sunday-school teachers, and old-fashioned people, who still go to prayer meetings, are, after all, the best social reformers this world has. They have the one complete gospel; all others are but 6 6 6.

IV. WHAT IS YOUR NUMBER? Apply this to your own life. What is your number? Is it 6 or 7? You can get a good deal out of a life of sixes. You may get a lot of real pleasure out of life without religion. But the best of the world's pleasure is only 6. The provoking thing about it is that there is always something short. It never quite satisfies. Jesus Christ said of it, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again"; and the more he drinks the more he thirsts. But He gives the water of life that leaves no thirst; and, after all, you never know what happiness is till you drink of that stream. In character, too, you may be good without Christ. I admit it. But your goodness is only 6. A fine specimen of the "6" order came to Jesus one day. He had kept the commandments; he was greatly respected; so excellent was he that when Jesus saw him "He loved him." But He said unto him, "One thing thou lackest." Only one, but it was the one thing needful. (*S. Chadwick.*)

The number of the beast:—The opening words of this verse, "Here is wisdom," seem almost ironical in the light of the subsequent treatment that the verse has received, for it has been chosen as one of the favourite spots where sober understanding shall be forgotten. The people that have been busiest in reckoning up the number of the beast have, far from revealing the wisdom of which the passage speaks, only served to show us how foolish and fantastic even some good and earnest men can be. The name of anything, when used in the ideal and symbolic way in which it is used in this passage, is used to denote its real and essential being. The ideal function of a name is to express accurately and completely what the thing is. In actual life names are very far from doing this, but symbolic pictures deal with the ideal, and not the actual. So the name of the beast denotes its true nature, its living collection of qualities. The number of the name gives mystic indication of the fate that lies hidden in and for such a character. It is the destiny of the life written in the name. Therefore, while it is called "the number of the name of the beast" in one verse, it is simply called "the number of the beast" in another. It is not an external label, an arithmetical puzzle, but is vitally related to the life and character of the beast. Now, I don't think there can be the slightest doubt that the "beast" is a general expression for the kingdom of evil. The aptness of the term needs no exposition. Ferocity and baseness and all else that is included in brute-force serve well to symbolise the fierce and lawless power of evil.

I. THE KINGDOM OF EVIL, THOUGH APPARENTLY STRONG, IS ESSENTIALLY WEAK. This is the first truth symbolised by the number 6 6 6. It is eternally incapable of becoming 7 7 7, and therefore eternally incapable of imperilling the supremacy of God.

II. THE HEIGHT OF ITS POWER IS THE CERTAIN HOUR OF ITS DOWNFALL. How vividly the symbols point out this! 6 6 6 almost the summit of attainment; but when it seems almost on the point of scaling the heavens and seizing the throne, out flash the fierce lightnings from the heart of regnant truth and purity, and the black mass is scattered to the earth crushed and impotent. It is the curse of evil that it cannot stop, that it must go on trying to swell itself out into the dimensions of God, and because it has eternal incapacity for reaching such a magnitude, it necessarily follows that after it has swollen to a certain point, like the frog in the fable, it bursts and collapses. Just like a bubble, the more it swells the nearer it is to destruction. The larger its dimensions, the less power it has to hold itself together. The most effectual way of crushing a weak and ambitious man is to load him with power and responsibility, for the weak spirit will not be able to sustain

the burden, and will fall under it. Then his inherent weakness will be made manifest, and the number of his name be revealed. So beastism, or the kingdom of evil, can go so far and no further. It is fatally flawed by the fact that its own power is its own destruction. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1-13. A Lamb, . . . and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand.—
*The 144,000 :—*I. WHO ARE THESE 144,000 ? They are the identical 144,000 sealed ones spoken of in chapter vii., with only this difference, that there we see them in their earthly relations and peculiar consecration ; and here we see them with their earthly career finished, and in the enjoyment of the heavenly award for their faithfulness. II. WHAT ARE THE CHIEF MARKS OR CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE 144,000 ? 1. The first and foremost is that of a true and conspicuous confession. They have the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. This is their public mark as against the mark of the worshippers of the Beast. There is nothing more honourable in God's sight than truth and faithfulness of confession. 2. Another particular is their unworldliness. Whilst most people in their day " dwell upon the earth," sit down upon it as their rest and choice, derive their chief comfort from it, these are " redeemed from the earth"—withdrawn from it, bought away by the heavenly promises and the Divine grace to live above it, independent of it. They are quite severed from the world in heart and life. 3. A third point is their pureness. " They are virgins," in that they have lived chaste lives, both as to their faithfulness to God in their religion, and as to their pureness from all bodily lewdness. 4. A further quality is their truthfulness. " In their mouth was not found what is false." These people were truthful in speech, had also a higher truthfulness. They have the true faith ; they hold to it with a true heart ; they exemplify it by a true manner of life. They are the children of truth in the midst of a world of untruth. III. WHAT, THEN, IS THEIR REWARD ? 1. Taking the last particular first, they stand approved, justified, and accepted before God. " They are blameless." To stand before God approved and blameless from the midst of a condemned world—a world given over to the powers of perdition by reason of its unbelief and sins, is an achievement of grace and faithfulness in which there may well be mighty exultation. 2. In the next place, they have a song which is peculiarly and exclusively their own. Though not connected with the throne, as the Living Ones, nor crowned and seated as the Elders, they have a ground and subject of joy and praise which neither the Living Ones nor the Elders have ; nor is any one able to enter into that song except the 144,000. None others ever fulfil just such a mission, as none others are ever sealed with the seal of the living God in the same way in which they were sealed. They have a distinction and glory, a joy and blessedness, after all, in which none but themselves can ever share. 3. They stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. To be " with the Lamb," as over against being with the Beast, is a perfection of blessing which no language can describe. It is redemption. It is victory. It is eternal security and glory. To be with the Lamb " on Mount Zion " is a more special position and relation. Glorious things are spoken of Jerusalem which have never yet been fulfilled. On His holy hill of Zion God hath said that He will set up His King, even His Son, who shall rule all the nations (*Psa. ii.*). The Lamb is yet to take possession of the city where He was crucified, there to fulfil what was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin over His head when He died. And when that once comes to pass, these 144,000 are with Him, His near and particular associates in that particular relation and administration. 4. They are " a firstfruit to God and to the Lamb," not the firstfruit of all the saved, for the Living Ones and the Elders are in heavenly place and glory above and before them ; but a firstfruit of another and particular harvest ; the firstfruit from the Jewish field, in that new beginning with the Israelitish people for their fathers' sakes, which is to follow the ending of the present " times of the Gentiles." They are brought to the confession of Christ, and sealed in their foreheads with the name of both the Father and the Son, during the time that the rest of their blood-kin are covenanting with and honouring the Antichrist as Messiah. IV. WHAT, NOW, OF THE ANGEL-MESSAGES ?

1. The first message. That an angel is the preacher here is proof positive that the present dispensation is then past and changed. It is no longer the meek and entreating voice, beseeching men to be reconciled to God, but a great thunder from the sky, demanding of the nations to fear the God, as over against the false god whom they were adoring—to give glory to Him, instead of the infamous Beast whom they were glorifying—to worship the Maker of all things, as against the worship of him who can do no more than play his hellish tricks with the things that are made; and all this on the instant, for the reason that “the hour of judgment is come.” 2. The second message. With the hour of judgment comes the work of judgment. A colossal system of harlotry and corruption holds dominion over the nations. God has allowed it for the punishment of those who would not have Christ for their Lord, but now He will not allow it longer. Therefore another angel comes with the proclamation: “Fallen, fallen, the great Babylon,” &c. The announcement is by anticipation as on the very eve of accomplishment, and as surely now to be fulfilled. The particulars are given in chapter xvii. and xviii. There also the explanation of the object of this announcement is given. It is mercy still struggling in the toils of judgment, if that by any means some may yet be snatched from the opening jaws of hell; for there the further word is, “Come out of her, My people,” &c. 3. The third message. And for the still more potent enforcement of this call a third angel appears, preaching and crying with a great voice, that whosoever is found worshipping the Beast and his image, or has the Beast’s mark on his forehead or on his hand, even he shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is mingled without dilution in the cup of His anger, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascends to the ages of ages, and they have no rest day and night! It is an awful commination; but these are times of awful guilt, infatuation, and wickedness. And when men are in such dangers, marching direct into the mouth of such a terrible perdition, it is a great mercy in God to make proclamation of it with all the force of an angel’s eloquence. The same is also for the wronged and suffering ones who feel the power of these terrible oppressors. It tells them how their awful griefs shall be avenged on their hellish persecutors. 4. The fourth message. There is no suffering for any class of God’s people in any age like the sufferings of those who remain faithful to God during the reign of the Antichrist. Here, at this particular time and juncture, is the patience or endurance of them that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. To come out of Babylon, and to stand aloof from its horrible harlotries, is a costly thing. Therefore there is another proclamation from heaven for their special strengthening and consolation. Whether this word is also from an angel we are not told; but it is a message from glory and from God. And it is a sweet and blessed message. It is a message which John is specially commanded to write, that it may be in the minds and hearts of God’s people of every age, and take away all fear from those who in this evil time are called to lay down their lives because they will not worship Antichrist. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth.” And when violence, cruelty, and slaughter are the consequence of a life of truth and purity, the sooner it is over the greater the beatitude. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

*The communion of saints:—*I. The communion of saints is THE RESTORATION OF FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. There are in the will and work of God three perfect and eternal unities: the unity of three Persons in one nature; the unity of two natures in one Person; and the unity of the Incarnate Son with His elect—the Head with the members of His Body mystical. This is the foundation of the communion of God and man. “A Lamb stood,” &c. II. The communion of saints is THE RESTORATION OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF MEN WITH EACH OTHER. Our regeneration unites us to the Divine Person in whom God and man are one; and by union with Him we are reunited to all whom He has likewise united to Himself. As the vine has one nature in root and stem, branch and spray, fibre and fruit, so the mystical and true Vine in earth and heaven has one substance and one life, which is the basis of all fellowship in love and will, in sympathy and action, in mutual intercessions of prayer, and in mutual ministries of power. Lessons: 1. Let us learn, first, that we can never be lonely or forsaken in this life. No trial can isolate us, no sorrow can cut us off from the communion of saints. There is but one thing in which the sympathy of Christ has no share, and that is, the guilt of wilful sin. 2. And let us learn further, by the reality of this heavenly fellowship, to live less in this divided world. 3. Lastly, let us learn from this communion of saints to live

in hope. They who are now at rest were once like ourselves—fallen, weak, faulty, sinful, &c. But now they have overcome. Only one thing there is in which we are unlike them: they were common in all things except the uncommon measure of their inward sanctity. In all besides we are as they; only it is now our turn to strive for the crown of life. (*Archdeacon Manning.*) **Having His Father's name written in their foreheads.**—*The sublimest human distinction*:—I. It is the most BEAUTIFUL. The face is the beauty of man; there the soul reveals itself, sometimes in sunshine, and sometimes in clouds. The beauty of the face is not in features, but in expression, and the more it expresses of purity, intelligence, generosity, tenderness, the more beautiful. How beautiful, then, to have God's name radiating in it! God's name is the beauty of the universe. II. It is most CONSPICUOUS. "In their foreheads." It is seen wherever you go, fronting every object you look at. Godliness cannot conceal itself. Divine goodness is evermore self-revealing. III. It is most HONOURABLE. A man sometimes feels proud when he is told he is like some great statesman, ruler, thinker, reformer. How transcendently honourable is it to wear in our face the very image of God! Let us all seek this distinction. With the Father's name on our foreheads we shall throw the pageantry of the Shahs, the Czars, and all the kings of the earth into contempt. (*Homilist.*) *The name on the forehead*:—I. A CLAIM OF APPROPRIATION. II. A SIGN OF OFFICE. III. A MARK OF DIGNITY. IV. A PLEDGE OF SECURITY. V. A MEMENTO OF OBLIGATION. 1. To remember that ye are not your own. 2. To profess openly. 3. Faithfully to discharge functions. 4. To the exercise of unvarying trust. 5. To be holy. (*Preacher's Portfolio.*)

Harpers harping with their harps.—*Musical art in its relation to Divine worship*:—We claim for music the first place among the fine arts. 1. Because it is the most ideal, for the ideal is the highest. 2. Because it most thoroughly expresses the various emotions of the human mind, and therefore has the widest reach over human life. 3. Because, like love, it is eternal. I. WHAT KIND OF MUSIC IS BEST? Universal agreement on the subject is not to be expected, because the subject is so mixed up with questions of expediency, of taste, of knowledge. People have a right to expect that the canticles and hymns shall be sung to music in which they can join, but devout people who can sing must be taught that, while spiritually alert, they must be vocally silent in many parts of Divine worship. II. HOW CAN WE BEST SECURE THE BEST MUSIC FOR DIVINE WORSHIP? As to the voices, assuming that those of the men are sweet in quality, the success of a male choir may be said to depend on three things mainly: First, that the voices of the boys shall be properly trained, so that they produce a clear and flute-like tone. Secondly, that no music should be attempted which is beyond the ability of the choir to execute. Thirdly, that nothing be put on the programme until it is thoroughly rehearsed and well known. Then let everything be done "decently and in order." Then will our Church music be a real help to devotion. Hearts will be uplifted, voices upraised. Then will our sacred songs be as the echo of the angelic songs above, and God will be glorified. (*J. W. Shackelford, D.D.*) *Music in heaven*:—There is music in heaven, because in music there is no self-will. Music goes on certain laws and rules. Man did not make these laws of music; he has only found them out; and if he be self-willed and break them, there is an end of his music instantly; all he brings out is discord and ugly sounds. The greatest musician in the world is as much bound by those laws as the learner in the school, and the greatest musician is the one who, instead of fancying that, because he is clever, he may throw aside the laws of music, knows the laws of music best, and observes them most reverently. And therefore it was that the old Greeks, the wisest of all the heathens, made a point of teaching their children music; because they said it taught them not to be self-willed and fanciful, but to see the beauty of order, the usefulness of rule, the divineness of laws. And therefore music is fit for heaven; therefore music is a pattern and type of heaven, and of the everlasting life of God, which perfect spirits live in heaven; a life of melody and order in themselves; a life of harmony with each other and with God. (*C. Kingsley.*) **They sung as it were a new song.**—*The new song in the soul* (with Eph. v. 19):—The text from St. Paul is the necessary introduction to the one from St. John. They both suggest for us the necessary connection of inner and outer harmony of being. What makes martial music noisy, blatant, offensive? It is when a spirit of mere savage quarrelsomeness is in connection with it. And what makes it majestic and able to marshal and lead hosts? It is the force of national duties and earnestness, giving it commanding power. Our texts give the highest Christian form of this truth, the connection of inner and outer harmony. It declares that no man can learn the new song who

has not been redeemed in nature; none can sing it who has not made, first, melody in the heart unto the Lord. First, consider this in connection with the statement that holiness, goodness, is a concord. Every virtue is a harmony. It is the result of combining different and separate tendencies. It is complex. It is, as it were, a chord of the inner music, formed by striking different notes of character together, and combining them in one. And that is what makes virtue so hard of acquisition and a virtuous Christian life such a struggle. The true graces are harmonies of different notes; are chords of character; not merely a single note of character, struck with a single finger, easily, and at once; but each, a combination of various notes of character, revealed only by using all the hand, and both hands of life; including different parts and requiring earnest, anxious toil, before it is harmoniously and truly struck—struck with pleasure to the great Hearer, to whose ear your character makes melody in your heart, the Lord. Look at some of the several virtues, and see if it be not so; that each one is a chord, a combination, a harmony. Take love, or charity, the most winning and prominent of virtues. It is not simple. In its true height it is a combination. It is composed of the union of self-sacrifice and benevolence to others. Passion is never true love, for it is selfish. Or take another human virtue, true human courage, and see its component parts. Who is a brave man, but he who, keenly alive to pain, tingling through and through with sensitiveness of danger and love of life, is yet also full of the sense of duty and the glow of patriotism, and out of those two very different parts constructs the delicate, perfect harmony of his courage? Or again, select a third one out of the catalogue of noble human characteristics; and see how, in its true form, it is a harmony, a combination of differing elements. Take freedom, liberality, or liberty of spirit. There is a true and a false freedom. The false freedom is simply license. It has only one thought—to do its own will, to get its own desire, to be unbound by others' will. It has no harmony. It has but a single note, a single tone, and it is easily gained. There is no struggle, no argument to reconcile and combine any differences in a melody. But there is a truer human liberty than this; that which Paul describes when he says, "as free, but as servants"; one which strives, while doing its own will, to be sure that it is also doing the will of God and truth; one which labours to combine obedience with freedom, to be obediently free and to be freely obedient; to make it the freest action of the human will to do God's will, and to obey the commandments of His love and truth. That is a hardly gained, but a very rich harmony. Take still one more example of the fact that every virtue, in its true, essential form, is a concord, a combination of tones. You will find it in the trait of justice. To be just is not a very simple operation. It requires, first, wisdom, judgment, intelligent power of discerning and discriminating. It requires, secondly, courage, freedom to announce the decision of wisdom, without fear or prejudice. It requires, thirdly, temperateness, power of self-restraint, that there be no excess, or passion, or over-statement of one's decisions in the vehemence of his convictions. Every act of justice must include these three. But let us think on a little further. The Bible calls human virtues and graces "fruits of the Spirit." Their harmony is produced by the Spirit of God. Have you ever stood and wondered at the wild, sweet music of an *Æolian harp*—held by no human hands, resonant under no human fingers, but swayed by the breathing winds of nature, bringing forth its strange combined melodies? Such an instrument is the human soul. Strung and held by no human hands, with the spiritual breath of God the Spirit passing over its strings, seeking to awaken them to speak in those perfect harmonies which we call "virtues," but which the Bible calls "fruits," or results "of the Spirit." Oh, let us not quench the Spirit. It is about us, fraught and laden with all the airs and strains of God; able and waiting to call them out of our hearts, and the materials of our character and nature. By it we may be able to make melody in our hearts to the Lord. By it we may strive to do here what the redeemed shall do by it at last before the throne, in that land of the Spirit. We may learn from the Spirit that perfect new song which can only be sung by a melodious heart and nature. (*Fred. Brooks.*) *The music of heaven:*—1. The heavenly song is described as "a new song." And it is so in that the theme of it will be new. "They sing," says St. John, "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The song of Moses celebrated redemption out of Egypt. Here, on earth, the Church cannot fully comprehend the whole development of the plan of Divine mercy. The process is still going on, and not until all the saved are brought to glory will it be completed; and hence those songs which most appropriately express our holiest thoughts and aspirations

here will not be suited to our condition hereafter. "The new song" is adapted to our enlarged powers and to our altered circumstances. 2. Continued freshness will characterise the song of heaven. The sweetest strains lose more or less of their freshness by constant repetition. 3. Further, the music of heaven shall give rise to new emotions. In the life of the celebrated composer Handel it is stated that upon being asked how he felt when composing "the Hallelujah Chorus," he replied, "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God Himself." And it is said that a friend called upon him when he was in the act of setting to music the pathetic words, "He was despised and rejected of men," and found him absolutely sobbing. What will be the emotions of joy and gratitude which will be experienced when all the redeemed, gathered out of every nation, and kindred and tongue shall unite as with one heart and one voice, and sing "the song of Moses and of the Lamb"? 4. And then unlike the songs of earth, "the new song" shall never be interrupted. Sin, sorrow, death, are all unknown there! The song of heaven shall be an eternal song, and the strains of the music of the heavenly harpers shall flow on for evermore! Have you the prospect of joining the heavenly throng? (*S. D. Hillman.*) *A song of freedom:*—A "new song," it is doubtless the song of a new and higher victory. A song is, above all, an expression of the heart, something spontaneous, the irrepressible upspringing of an inward emotion. A bird sings because it cannot help singing, and because its little heart is thrilling with an overflowing joy; and so they who sing the "new song" have had, doubtless, some true experience of a great good and joy which causes them to sing. I think that it is the experience of every thoughtful man that all the real misery springs, in some way, from spiritual wrong. If he have lost friends, which is one of our great natural griefs, yet if sin had not thrust itself into this sorrow, if the soul of the friend as well as one's own had been perfectly true to God, and to right, one would find in the bereavement a cause to rejoice, for to the holy dead God reveals the fulness of His love. It is the conscious want of the love of God, manifesting itself in acts of selfishness, ingratitude, and treason to truth and duty—it is always this that has made the human spirit wail. Selfishness is a constant pain, and love a constant joy. I do not deny the many natural sorrows of life, and that they are sometimes painful beyond human power to endure, but we would be strong from a Divine strength to bear troubles and sufferings which fall to our lot in this life, and they would be only for our discipline and perfection, were we without transgression. These would be outside sufferings. But it is the feeling that we have acted unrighteously, that we have stained our soul's honour, that we have been unthankful to the heavenly Father. It is this that consumes the spirit within us. If we are raised for one instant by the quick motion of faith, by the absorbing exercise of prayer, by the unselfish act of pure obedience, into the light and liberty of God's presence, we gain inward freedom and peace, we experience an absolute deliverance from the tyranny of evil. We may perceive, then, why the power of sin in our human nature is called in the Scriptures a "bondage." It is pure absolutism. Let the bondsman strive once to free himself, to shake himself loose from his bonds, to change his own nature, and he will see what a grasp evil has. To be freed from the power of evil would soothe all pangs, would wipe away all tears, sorrow, care, and would restore to the life-giving presence and joy of God. Can we not then begin, in some feeble manner I grant, to perceive or imagine what may be the significance of the "new song"? It is in truth a song of freedom, and we need not wonder that it is represented to be like the sound of many waters, the outpouring of innumerable hearts on the free shore of eternity, for God has made the soul to be free and to have no law over it but the law of love. There are, indeed, but few such chords that vibrate in human hearts. Sorrow is one of these. Coleridge said that at the news of Nelson's death no man felt himself a stranger to another; and of these universal chords, that of freedom is also one. Such a spontaneous cry rises from an enslaved nation, whose chains are broken by some God-inspired man. Never shall I forget the mighty shout I heard that went up from the whole people of Florence, gathered together in the great market-square of the beautiful city on the Arno, at the news of a decisive victory gained over the powerful enemy of Italian independence—Austria. A new, unlooked-for joy poured into the hearts of the suffering and long-oppressed Italian people that they were at length free! It made them one. It overflowed their hearts with sudden strength, and men fell upon each other's necks and kissed each other, and their joy found expression in shouts and songs. So it will be a new joy in heaven to be free—to be free from the shameful oppression of evil. The believer may, in some feeble and

imperfect measure, in his best times, when Christ his Light is near, be able to conceive of this state of entire victory over, or deliverance from, sin, because he has in the present life yearnings after it, and prophecies of it; but to the unrenewed mind this truth is not quite clear. It is, on the contrary, a thought which gives that mind, when it thinks at all, much uneasiness and confusion. For it has had fleeting tastes of sweetness in this earthly life, and in those pleasures into which God does not come, poor though they be, and it fears to lose those alloyed and swift-passing experiences of happiness in being holy. It would not release entirely its hold upon these, for fear of losing its happiness altogether. But we must let go one to win the other. We must push off from the shore of this world to gain the free shore of eternity; and so complete is the victory of heaven, that not even such an electric thought of evil as has been described, shall pass over the soul. Holiness is happiness. Goodness is joy. Love is freedom. There are no remains of the conflict of temptation. The spell of sin is broken; and as freedom is one of those things that never grows old, so the song of heaven shall be a "new song." II. But another and higher sense remains, in which it would seem that the song of heaven is called a "new song," arising from the fact that this heavenly freedom which is sung, does not end in ourselves, in our freedom or holiness or joy, but ends in Christ, and in the Divine will in which dwells this pure and mighty power of the soul's deliverance from evil. (*J. M. Hoppin.*) *The song of the redeemed*:—I. **THEIR CHARACTER.** They are "redeemed from the earth." Redemption, in their case, was not merely virtual, but actual; not in price only, but also in power. It was a redemption carried into their personal experience. Such must ours be, or the price of our redemption has been paid for us in vain. There is pardon, finely represented as implying submission to God, and acceptance and acknowledgment by him. The Father's name is written in their foreheads. There is confession of God before men. They practised no unholy concealment; their religion was public, and declared at all hazards. They were undefiled. They were unspotted from the world, even its more prevalent errors—errors recommended by example, justified by sophistry, alluring by interest, and enforced by persecution. There is their obedience. This is impressively described by their following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. There is their completeness. Sanctified throughout, they were preserved blameless in spirit, soul, and body. And there is their redemption from earth. They were redeemed from its corporate society, as the world. That remained; they were chosen out of it. They were redeemed from its cowardly and selfish principles, by which truth is sacrificed to ease and gain; whereas these sacrificed ease and gain for truth. From its example; for, while the multitude were wandering after the beast, these were following the Lamb. From its pollutions; for they had been washed from their sins by the blood of Him who loved them. From earth itself; for they are now before the throne. II. **THEIR PLACE.** "Before the throne." 1. It is the place of glorious vision. 2. It is the place of eternal security. Day is there, never succeeded by night. There is quiet, unbroken by alarm: the gates of the city are not shut by day or night. There is life, never to be quenched in death. For ever does the river flow from under the throne, and the tree of life feels no winter. III. **THE REPRESENTED ACTION.** 1. "They sang." Powerful emotions of joy seek for outward expression. This is one of the laws of our very nature. The expression will be suitable to the emotion. Grief pours forth its wailings; joy is heard in the modulations of verse, and the sweet swells and cadences of music. 2. They sang "a new song." Every deliverance experienced by the saints of God calls for a new song: How much more, therefore, this, the final deliverance from earth! Their song is new, as demanded by new blessings. John saw before the throne "a Lamb, as it had been newly slain." The phrase intimates that blessings for ever new will flow from the virtue of His atonement, and the manifestation of the Divine perfections by Him. Nor shall the song be new as to individuals only, but as to the whole glorified Church. 3. They sang it "before the throne." The glorious fruit of "the travail of His soul." IV. **THE PECULIARITY OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT.** "No man could learn that song." Not so much to the sound, the music, of the song, as to its subject, does this language refer; and such subjects only can be turned into song, as dwell in the very spirits of the redeemed. 1. There are remembered subjects. The redeemed from earth recollect the hour when light broke in on their darkness. 2. There are present subjects. (*R. Watson.*) *The unlearned song of the redeemed*:—What can be the meaning of this singular announcement of a song not to be taught even to the other inhabitants of heaven? We need but refer to a familiar

principle of the mind's operations, whose religious significance is often not perceived; by which toil, pain, and trial, however grievous in the experience, turn to comfort and delight in the retrospect. As, by the influence of chemical attraction, the most glossy white is brought out on textures originally of the blackest dye, or as the mere constant falling of the bleaching sunlight makes a dull surface glisten like snow, so do the soul's melancholy passages change as they are acted on by reflection, and the darkest threads of its experience brighten in the steady light of memory. There are few enjoyments more exquisite than the father feels in telling his son of the hardships of his early life. How he dilates on the efforts and sacrifices with which he began his career! But would he spare one hard day's labour, though it wore and bent his frame? one hour's thirst, with which his lips were parched? Not one: not one act of self-denial, not one patient stretch of endurance; for all these, by this transforming principle, have become most pleasant to his mind. On the same principle, we can understand, without referring to unworthy motives, the soldier's interest in his oft-repeated narratives. Oh, the dark and deadly scene! the ground wet with blood, and the smoke of carnage mounting heavy and slow over the dead and the dying! It is not necessarily that his soul breathes the spirit of war; but it is that these, like other trials, turn to joys, as viewed from the height of his present thought, stretching picturesquely through the long valley of the past. The same principle operates in the hardships of peaceful life. The sailor has a like gladness from the dangers with which he has been environed on the stormy deep. He interprets the almost intolerable accidents that overtook him into a good and gracious providence, and sings of his calamity, privation, and fear. So all the sweetest songs, and all the grandest and most touching poetry, that have ever been on earth breathed into sound or written in characters, have sprung out of such work and strife, sorrow and peril. And why should not a new song, unknown even to the elder seraphs, be so composed and framed in heaven, out of all life's trouble and disaster; while the mercy of God, the atoning influence of Christ, all heavenly help and guidance that they have received in their struggles, shall add depth and melody to those voices of the redeemed? Such is the mystery and bounty of the Divine. Paradoxical as it may seem, God means not only to make us good, but to make us also happy, by sickness, disaster, and disappointment. For the truly happy man is not made such by a pleasant and sunny course only of indulged inclinations and gratified hopes. Hard tasks, deferred hopes, though they "make the heart sick," the beating of adverse or the delay of baffling winds, must enter into his composition here below, as they will finally enter into his song on high. There is more than pleasant fancy or cheering prediction in that language about beauty being given for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; for out of dust and ashes alone beauty can grow; supreme gladness glistens nowhere but upon the face where grief hath been sitting; and the highest praise to God is sung when He hath delivered us from the pit of woe and despair. The opening of one of the most strangely beautiful flowers, from the roughest of prickly and unsightly stems, is an emblem of the richest blooming of moral beauty and pleasure from thorns and shapes of ugliness in the growth of the immortal mind. But there is a strict condition. They who would blend their voices in that happy choir, to which the hosts of heaven pause to listen, must be faithful in performing this toil, in overcoming this temptation, in enduring this trial. An ancient poet says, it is a delight to stand or walk upon the shore, and to see a ship tossed with tempest upon the sea; or to be in a fortified tower, and see hosts mingled upon a plain. But what is such pleasure compared with that felt by those who look down from the firm ground of heaven upon their own tossings in the voyage they have with a sacred and religious faithfulness accomplished, and fix their retrospective eye on the fight they, with a holy obstinacy, waged with their own passions and besetting sins? (*C. A. Bartol.*) *The new song*:—We shall begin our meditation on this vision by considering the occupation of those referred to. They sing. Praise is often spoken of as the chief occupation of the saints in heaven. Nor need we wonder that such is the case. They have passed to the land of pure delight. They mingle in congenial society. Above all, they behold Him, whom they have long adored afar off, and with Him they maintain unbroken communion. His presence and voice fill their hearts with joy, deep and intense. Nor does the inspiration of their song come only from the present; it comes also from the past. Then they fully learn what has been done to them and for them during their earthly journey. This praise, too, is unceasing. Other engagements and interests concern men in this life. They have wants that must be supplied; they

have burdens that must be borne; they have battles that must be fought. And these urge them to prayer as often as to praise. Even up to the Jordan's bank they must stretch forth their hands and raise their voice in supplication. But, in that better land, they enjoy satisfaction and rest. Full provision has been made, and they have only to celebrate the goodness that has done it all. That which they sing is called "a new song." It is heavenly in origin and character. It is no feeble strain of earth, weak in thought and poor in expression. It far transcends in matter and in form the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the Church below. These were suited to the partial knowledge of this lower sphere, but they are inadequate to the fuller view and the deeper experience to which the redeemed have risen. Of that anthem we catch some echoes in the revelation which John has given us. It is a song of salvation, it is a shout of triumph. It is called "the song of Moses and of the Lamb," and this title is suggestive of its tenor. From a danger greater than that to which the Israelites were exposed have those who are with the Lamb been delivered. Not from physical evil or an earthly enemy, but from spiritual loss and death, and from the power of the wicked one, have they been rescued. Not only, therefore, do they sing the song of Moses; they sing also the song of the Lamb. Being a new song, it must be learned by those who would sing it. But the text warns us that this is possible only for those who have undergone a certain training. Without discipline we cannot take our place in the choir above, engage in the occupations, or enjoy the beauties and delights of the Paradise above. This, indeed, we might understand apart from revelation. All experience combines to suggest it. In the material world everything has its place and work, and is specially fitted for filling the one and performing the other. We recognise in that sphere the reign of law. Every branch of industry has its own rules and its own methods. To learn these an apprenticeship must be undergone. And this is as applicable to the moral region as it is to the social and the intellectual. Place a man of dissolute habits, of vicious temper, of impure thought, of blasphemous speech, in the company of men and women who are spiritual in tone, pure in thought, reverent in speech, and what will his experience be? Not certainly one of satisfaction and enjoyment. He will be wretched. He will long to escape that he may go to his own company and to his own place. Now, this truth, which is received and acted on in all spheres of human activity, has force beyond the limits of earth. It touches the constitution of things: it rests on our nature, and must, therefore, determine our experience not only here but hereafter. To occupy our minds with the foolish, if not the wicked, things of earth, is to render ourselves incapable of dealing with the concerns of heaven; that before we can even learn the song of the redeemed we must have been prepared, for not every one can learn the new song that is being sung before the throne, before the four beasts, and before the elders. But we are not only warned that preparation is required; we are also taught in what it is to consist. Its general character may, indeed, be gathered from what has just been said. We have been reminded that to engage heartily in any occupation we must make ourselves acquainted with its rules and methods, that to enjoy any society we must have in some measure risen to the attainment of its members. In order, then, to discover what is needful, by way of training, before we can join this company, enjoy their fellowship, and sing their song, we have only to inquire by what features they are marked. They are spiritual in character, they are with the Lamb on Mount Zion, they are pure and holy. From this it follows that the education which those who would join them must undergo is spiritual. It is not intellectual only. Mere acquaintance with what concerns persons is not of necessity sympathy with them. Only when knowledge touches heart and life can there be fellowship, for only then are companions animated by the same spirit and interested in the same subjects and pursuits. Nor, on the other hand, can the training be merely mechanical. By no outward washing or cleansing can we free the soul from its foul blot; can we make ourselves pure, worthy to stand before the great white throne and Him who sits thereon. The one hundred and forty and four thousand who do learn the song are said to have been "redeemed from the earth." They have been "redeemed." This indicates that by nature they are not fit for the occupation referred to. The faculty qualifying them for it has been lost, and has to be restored. The dormant faculties must be roused and developed, the powers that have been misapplied must be converted. The term "redemption" is employed in Scripture in two different senses, or rather to suggest two aspects of the change which it indicates. At one time it signifies release from the bondage of the Evil One without; at another, release from the bondage of the evil nature within. Here

it is the inner rather than the outer reference that is in view. It is less escape from slavery and danger than purity and elevation of character that is thought of. Not at once are we made fit for heaven in the fullest sense: not at once is the hold which sin has gained on us relaxed. That comes by struggle, by warring against the powers and principalities arrayed against us, and to which we have submitted. Emancipation in this view is education, growth, advance. The possibility of it rests on living faith, and the realisation of it is gradual, to be carried forward day by day. We have not yet attained, neither are we already perfect, but we follow after, pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In His footsteps we should be seeking to walk, and only as we are doing so are we preparing ourselves for the engagements and the delights of the Better Land. That such is the nature of the redemption spoken of in the text becomes still clearer when we observe that those spoken of are to be redeemed "from the earth." By the earth is meant the lower nature, and what stands related to it. To be redeemed from the earth is to be lifted above it, to use it without abusing it, to act under the control of the Spirit, and this is a movement that should be upward as well as onward—not monotonous progress on a dead level, but achievement, victory, exaltation. It must be apparent to every one that redemption from earth means meetness for heaven. Heaven and earth, in their spiritual use, stand opposed to each other. To be subject to the one is to be beyond the range and influence of the other. We should then be striving after this redemption; we should be seeking to value aright the things around, and we should be endeavouring to free ourselves from their dominion; we should be struggling, that the evil powers within may be subdued—knowing that only thus can we be prepared for joining the glorious company above, for learning the new song, and for celebrating the praise of Him who hath wrought salvation for us. (*Jas. Kidd, B.A.*) *The new song*:—Whilst passing in early manhood through a stage of deep dejection, John Stuart Mill found occasional comfort in music. One day he was thrown into a state of profound gloom by the thought that musical combinations were exhaustible. The octave was only composed of five tones and two semi-tones. Not all the combinations of these notes were harmonious, so there must be a limit somewhere to the possibilities of melody. No such possibility can limit the range of the "new song," for it shall be pitched to the key of God's ever-renewed mercies. We need not dread an eternity of monotonous, mill-round worship. The originality of God's mercy will be a spring of originality in us. (*T. G. Selby.*) **No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand.**—*Man training for heaven*:—I. HEAVEN REQUIRES HIS TRAINING. Man cannot blend in the happy harmony of the celestial state without previous training. Analogy would suggest this. In the physical system, every being is fitted to his position; his organism is suited to his locality. In the social system the same principle of fitness is required. The stolid clown could not occupy the professor's chair; nor could he who is reckless concerning law, right, and order, occupy the bench of justice. It is just so in relation to heaven. To feel at home in the society of the holy, cheerfully to serve the Creator and His universe, and to be in harmony with all the laws, operations, and beings, in the holy empire, we must manifestly be invested with the same character. But what is the training necessary? It is moral—the training of the spiritual sympathies; the heart being brought to say, "Thy will be done." II. REDEMPTION IS THE CONDITION OF HIS TRAINING. "Those who were redeemed from the earth." The redemption here referred to is evidently that procured by the system of Christ (chap. v. 9). The training requires something more than education; it needs emancipation—the delivering of the soul from certain feelings and forces incompatible with holiness—a deliverance from the guilt and power of evil. The grand characteristic of Christianity is, that it is a power "to redeem from all evil." III. THE EARTH IS THE SCENE OF HIS TRAINING. "Redeemed from the earth." The brightest fact in the history of the dark world is, that it is a redemptive scene. Amidst all the clouds and storms of depravity and sorrow that sweep over our path, this fact rises up before us as a bright orb that shall one day dispel all gloom and hush all tumult. Thank God, this is not a retributive, but a redemptive scene. But it should be remembered that it is not only a redemptive scene, but the only redemptive scene. (*Homilist.*) *Angelic incompetency*:—It seems that when the song of grace rises in heaven, there are a great multitude who are incompetent to take part in it. What is the song that utterly defies the unfallen spirits of heaven? It is the song of redemption, and I shall give you two or three reasons why those unfallen spirits find it an impossibility to sing it. 1. First, they never were redeemed

from sins. Standing in the light of heaven, they know nothing about the joy of rescue. Having sailed for ages on the smooth seas of heaven, they know nothing about the joy of clambering out from the eternal shipwreck. Beautiful and triumphant song, but they cannot sing it. It is to them an eternal impossibility. 2. Again, these unfallen spirits of heaven cannot mingle in that anthem because they do not know what it is to be comforted in suffering. You sometimes find a pianist who has been through all the schools, and has his diploma; but there seems to be no feeling in his playing. You say: "What's the matter with that musician?" Why, I will tell you: he has never had any trouble. But after he has lost children, or been thrust into sickness, then he begins to pour out the deep emotion of his own soul into the instrument, and all hearts respond to it. So, I suppose that our sorrows here will be somewhat preparative for the heavenly accord. It will not be a cold artistic trill, but a chant struck through with all the tenderness of this world's sufferings. 3. Again, I remark that the unfallen spirits of heaven cannot join in the anthem of grace in heaven, because they never were helped to die. Death is a tremendous pass. Do you not suppose when we get through that dark pass of death, we are going to feel gratitude to Christ, and that we will have a glorious anthem of praise to sing to Him? But what will those unfallen spirits of heaven do with such a song as that? They never felt the death shudder. They never heard the moan of the dismal sea. But you say: "That makes only a half and half heaven; so many of these spirits will be silent." Oh, there will be anthems in which all the hosts of heaven can join. The fact that there will be a hundred and forty and four thousand, as stated in the text, intimates that there will be a vast congregation participating. That song is getting sweeter and louder all the time. Some of our friends have gone up and joined in it. If our hearing were only good enough, we would hear their sweet voices rippling on the night air. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Not defiled with women.—*Undefiled*:—The words cannot be literally understood, but must be taken in the sense of similar words of the Apostle Paul, when, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." Such a "pure virgin" were the hundred and forty and four thousand now standing upon the Mount Zion. They had renounced all that unfaithfulness to God and to Divine truth which is so often spoken of in the Old Testament as spiritual fornication or adultery. They had renounced all sin. In the language of St. John in his first Epistle, they had "the true God, and eternal life." They had "guarded themselves from idols." (*W. Milligan, D.D.*) Follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.—*The followers of the Lamb*:—I. AN OUTLINE OF THE CHARACTER OF THOSE BLESSED ONES WHILE THEY ARE HERE. 1. First, notice their adherence to the doctrine of sacrifice while they are here: "These are they which follow the Lamb."

2. And, next, it is clear of these people that they followed the Lamb by practically imitating Christ's example, for it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Try to put your feet down in the footprints that He has left you. Do aim at complete conformity to Christ; and wherein you fail, mark that. 3. Now, notice in the sketch of these people that they recognised a special redemption: "These were redeemed from among men." Christ had done something for them that He had not done for others. 4. And as they recognized a special redemption, they made a full surrender of themselves to God and to the Lamb: "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." If you are the firstfruits unto God, be so; if you belong to yourself, serve yourself; but if, by the redemption of Christ, you are not your own, but bought with a price, then live as those who are the King's own, who must serve God, and cannot be content unless their every action shall tend to the Divine glory, and to the magnifying of Christ Jesus. 5. These people who are to be with Christ, the nearest to Him, are a people free from falsehood. "In their mouth was found no guile." If we profess to be Christians, we must have done with all craft, policy, double-dealing, and the like. The Christian man should be a plain man, who says what he means, and means what he says. 6. And then, once more, it is said that they are free from blemish; "they are without fault before the throne of God." II. A GLIMPSE OF THE PERFECT PICTURE IN HEAVEN. 1. Well, first, those who are with Christ enjoy perfect fellowship with Him. Up there, they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." They are always with Him. 2. Well, now, notice in this complete picture, next, that up there they are perfectly accepted with God: "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." God always accepts them; He always looks upon them as His firstfruits,

bought with His Son's blood, and brought by His Son into His heavenly temple, to be His for ever. Sometimes here we mar our service; but they never mar it there. 3. Observe, also, that they have perfect truth there in heart and soul: "In their mouth was found no guile." "No lie," says the Revised Version. Here, we do fall into error inadvertently, and sometimes, I fear me, negligently. 4. One more feature of that perfect picture is this, they enjoy perfect sinlessness before God: "They are without fault before the throne of God." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The followers of Jesus*:—I. THE INSTRUCTIVE VIEW OF CHRISTIANS which the text presents.

1. To follow Jesus is to maintain a visible profession of His religion. Are we doing this, or are we halting and hesitating? Is our character uniform, or are we religious and the contrary just as serves our convenience, and meets the wishes of our associates? 2. To follow Jesus is to receive Him as a Saviour. This implies the subjection of the soul to Him. 3. To follow Jesus is to listen to Him as a teacher. A scholar follows his master; he respects his authority. 4. To follow Jesus is to obey Him as a Sovereign. 5. To follow Jesus is to imitate Him as an example. II. What there is in such persons REMARKABLE; or why our attention should be so particularly directed to them: "These are they." 1. We see in them the favourites of heaven. The Lord loves them; He honours them; He delights to bless them, and to do them good. 2. We see in them the monuments of Divine mercy. "These are they" whom God hath called out of darkness into His marvellous light. 3. They are the most honourable characters on the face of the earth. Honourable in reality, not in appearance; in the sight of angels and of God, not perhaps in the judgment of men. 4. They are the most happy persons in times of difficulty and trial. These enter into the spirit and life of religion: they taste its comfort, they prove its real enjoyment. 5. They are the instruments of the Redeemer's glory. "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them"; glorified in their faith, their patience, their hope, but especially in their holy and active obedience. 6. They will be the inhabitants of a better world, the companions of Christ in His kingdom. In that upper world they still follow Him, but without the least reluctance, without the most distant feeling of languor. Reflections: 1. Are we the followers of Jesus? 2. What cause have we all to lament our carelessness and cowardice in religious concerns! 3. Let us rise to greater vigour in the ways of the Lord, and be unreservedly devoted to Him. (*T. Kidd.*)

Devotion to Christ:—I. In devotion to Christ we find THE TRUE GUIDE OF LIFE. II. In devotion to Christ, we find THE TRUE JOY OF LIFE. III. In following Christ is revealed to us THE TRUE END OF LIFE. (*R. Forgan, B.D.*) *The followers of the Lamb*:—I. WHAT IT IS to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. In His commandments—teaching—providences—example. Truly, without hypocrisy; constantly, without apostasy. Speedily, truly, undividedly, zealously, humbly, cheerfully, diligently, constantly, faithfully, transcendently. II. WHY they follow the Lamb. Because they are redeemed by His blood—enlightened by Him—loving Him—possessing His spirit, &c. III. THE EXCELLENCE of following the Lamb. They have His presence—shall know His mind—may come boldly to Him—shall be protected by Him, &c. IV. HOW THEY MAY BE KNOWN who follow the Lamb. By their character—spirit—name—graces—associates—language. (*W. Dyer.*)

Absolute obedience to the guidance of Christ:—We do not, of course, take the number here specified as implying more than greatness and completeness. It is based, probably, upon the number of the twelve apostles, and of the twelve tribes largely multiplied, and expresses, as has been said, the native and not degenerate progeny of the apostles. They are the princes of the kingdom, perfect in a multi-form unity, which are so delineated, equally derived from every quarter. What has won them their high pre-eminence? What has caused them to excel their brethren, so as to stand nearest to the Lamb upon the heavenly mount? Others may be pure, for the pure alone shall see God; others are redeemed, for otherwise there could be no salvation; but that which builds the thrones of the twelve and the long line of saints who come after is the following—the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

I. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THERE ARE FEW, IF ANY, AMONGST YOU WHO DO NOT HOLD WHAT ARE CALLED THE MAIN TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL. Complete unbelief is yet a rare thing amongst us. But if we go a little further and inquire to what the acceptance of the Christian Faith on the part of the multitude amounts, it will be found that their belief is but vague and general, that a vast element of scepticism mingles with their faith. To a certain extent, and to a certain extent only, do they follow the leading of Christ. Whilst He speaks of that which is easy of apprehension, which accords with the natural instinct, or is of palpable utility, they attend Him closely. Lo!

He tells of meekness, and purity, and uprightness, and charity; they go heartily along with Him. He warns of a judgment to come, by which the inequalities of this earthly life shall be adjusted; this squares with the conclusion of human intellect and is cordially received. But when He would lead them further, to the acceptance of truths which cannot be demonstrated, which to some extent, at any rate, must be believed on the witness of others, they recoil. Thus the duty and expediency of public worship is admitted. It is a national acknowledgment of duty, an instrument of Christian instruction; but to partake of the Blessed Sacrament involves the admission of certain supernatural powers still operating among us, and forthwith the great congregation dwindles to a scanty company. Nay, is not this sort of feeling on the increase? Just as there have been those who would not neglect prayer, though abstaining from Holy Communion; so, because prayer involves the present action of God, we are now hearing of men refusing to pray, and reducing religion yet further to the hearing and acting out moral lessons. Thus, while the guidance of the Lamb conducts to the knowledge of what is within the grasp of human reason, men are well pleased to wait upon His steps; but no sooner does He move, as it were, out of the open country, and pass onward into the narrower defiles of a land on which rest clouds and darkness, and there is nothing to guide save His footfall, than their steps halt. They follow Him not whithersoever He goeth. II. But we would not confine the application of the text to the case of doctrine; IT MAY WELL BE EXTENDED TO THAT OF PRACTICE ALSO. There is no more sad spectacle than that of a man whose conduct falls short of his convictions. He can admire the nobility of character, the self-devotion, the unworldliness of the saints of God; he is acute enough to perceive that the doctrines which theoretically he has accepted do, if fairly worked out, lead to a higher line of life; but, withal, he shrinks from pursuing it. He foresees how much must be surrendered, how many difficulties must be encountered, how few, perhaps, will appreciate him when all is done; and so he continues to live on a commonplace life of coldness and self-indulgence, with high principles and low practice—a splendid ideal, but no personal approach to it. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth!" How do they stand out, those saintly ones, in sharpest contrast with the half-obedience of ordinary Christians! Once having embraced the faith, theirs was the firm, unflinching tread of men prepared to resign all, to lose all. Through evil report and good report, through honour and dishonour, they followed their Lord whithersoever He led. Whithersoever—to the snapping asunder of closest ties, to the abandonment of our cherished hopes. Whithersoever—to the restraint of the reasoning faculty, to the submission of private opinion, to the subjection of the will, to the quenching of the passions. Would to God we might only drink in a little of their temper! There is, it has been well said, a first superficial will in man which resents opposition, refuses chastisement, as the child puts from it the medicine draught. So even Jesus Christ prayed that the cup might pass from Him. There is a second, deliberative will in man, which is formed upon reflection, and which is, in fact, the real act of volition. By this Jesus Christ took the cup and drank it to the dregs. That, whatever our first impulse, this second truest will shall in all things acquiesce in what God speaks and does about us and for us, must be our effort; so only can we train ourselves here for following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth along the infinite windings of the Everlasting Hills. (*Bp. Woodford.*)

The firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.—*The greater salvation:*—There is a salvation greater and less. For here it is said that these hundred and forty-four thousand are "firstfruits." Therefore we learn—I. WHAT THESE ARE NOT. 1. They are not all the saved. The very word indicates that there is much more to follow. They are but the beginning. Nor—2. Are these firstfruits the mass of the saved. True, a large number is named; but what is that compared with the "great multitude that no man can number, out of every," &c. II. WHAT THEY ARE. The word "firstfruits" teaches us that these thus named are—1. The pledge of all the rest. Thus Christ has "become the Firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv. 20). And so the natural firstfruits of corn guaranteed the rest of the harvest. For the same sun, and all other nurturing forces which had ripened the firstfruits, were there ready to do the same kindly office for all the rest. And so we are told, "The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." The same power is present for both the first and after fruits. 2. The pattern and representative of all the rest. Compare the first and after fruits. In the main they were alike, and so in the spiritual world

also. But—3. The firstfruits were pre-eminent over the rest. They were specially presented to God, and held in honour; so was it with the natural grain. But, without question, there is pre-eminence implied in being the firstfruits of the heavenly harvest. (1) In time. Theirs is “the first resurrection,” of which we read in chap. xx. “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years,” &c. (chap. xx.). (2) In honour. St. Paul called it “the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And our Lord tells us that there is a “first” and “last” in the kingdom of heaven; “a least” and “a greatest.” “One star differeth from another star in glory.” There is “an entrance administered abundantly,” and there is a “being saved so as by fire.” (3) In service. That they were pre-eminent here, who that knows their history on earth, or reads even this book, will question? (4) In character. See how they are described as to their spiritual purity, their unreserved consecration, their separateness from the world, their guilelessness and freedom from all deceit. (5) In the approval of God. Of them it is written, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection” (chap. xx.). 4. They are the elect of God. In another part of this book they are spoken of as “the called, and chosen, and faithful.” All are not firstfruits, greatest, first, in the kingdom of heaven. The very words imply order, gradation, rank. But it is for us to take heed as to—III. WHAT WE SHOULD STRIVE TO BE. (*S. Conway, B.A.*) *The Church God's firstfruits*:—The mention of the hundred and forty and four thousand as “firstfruits” suggests the thought of something to follow. What that is it is more difficult to say. It can hardly be other Christians belonging to a later age of the Church's history upon earth, for the end is come. It can hardly be Christians who have done or suffered more than other members of the Christian family, for in St. John's eyes all Christians are united to Christ, alike in work and martyrdom. Only one supposition remains. The hundred and forty and four thousand, as the whole Church of God, are spoken of in the sense in which the same expression is used by the Apostle James: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” Not as the first portion of the Church on earth, to be followed by another portion, but as the first portion of a kingdom of God wider and larger than the Church, are the words to be understood. The whole Church is God's firstfruits, and when she is laid upon His altar we have the promise that a time is coming when creation shall follow in her train, when “it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God,” when “the mountains and the hills shall break forth before the Redeemer into singing, and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands.” Why shall nature thus rejoice before the Lord? Let the Psalmist answer: “For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.” (*W. Milligan, D.D.*) In their mouth was found no guile.—*Truthfulness*:—It is related that when Petrarch, the Italian poet, a man of strict integrity, was summoned as a witness, and offered in the usual manner to take an oath before a court of justice, the judge closed the book, saying, “As to you, Petrarch, your word is sufficient.”

Vers. 6–8. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach.—*The angel in mid-heaven*:—I. THE REVIVAL OF A MISSIONARY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. We say a revival, for that spirit not only formed a necessary element all through the new dispensation, but it had its recognised place in the old. How many of the prophets of Judah and Israel, in varied words and imagery, exulted in the prospect of times when the exclusive privileges of the covenant-land would cease, when nations sitting in darkness would see the great Light! How often in the Psalms do we find the same aspirations! The sweetest strains of the minstrel monarch of Israel are missionary odes. It was the apostolic age, however, which was the era for the grand development of missionary zeal. But was missionary ardour to expire with the primitive era in the Church of Christ? a transient outburst of enthusiasm, when Peter and John crossed the borders of Palestine for the regions of Asia Minor and the distant lands of the dispersion; or when Paul braved the surges of the Adriatic and confronted the merchant princes of Corinth, the philosophers of Athens, and the captains of Imperial Rome? Far away in the distant east there lay a mighty empire. Poetry had sung of it as “the climes of the sun,” and British arms and enterprise had claimed it as their proudest trophy. But the darkness of spiritual death is brooding over it, and polluted fires are rising from unnumbered altars. Thither the Angel

of the vision wings His way. Altar-fire after altar-fire is quenched. The chime of the Sabbath bell and the hum of the Christian school break the stillness of moral solitude, and he comes back to tell, "In the region and shadow of death light has sprung forth." The evangelist beheld the Angel of the vision "flying." It denoted at once suddenness and rapidity. II. THE INSTRUMENTALITY EMPLOYED, "the everlasting gospel." This was the book the Mission Angel held in his hand. It may seem to proud reason a poor weapon with which to effect the moral conquest of the world. And more especially when that gospel is proclaimed, not by angels, but by feeble men. "But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." It seems to be a law or distinguishing feature in His government of the world that the mightiest ends are effected by the simplest and often unlikeliest means; that results are brought about by agencies and instrumentalities in themselves apparently inadequate to produce them. Look at His providential dealings as these are recorded in the page of Scripture. It was the sling of a shepherd-boy and a few pebbles from the brook which brought to the dust the giant of Philistia. Twelve humble fishermen from Tiberias' shores (1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29). And, powerful in the past, the same moral and spiritual forces are still to be mighty for the pulling down of heathen strongholds. Countless Dragons are to fall before this Ark of God. And who can fail to admire the wondrous adaptation of that everlasting gospel to all characters, and ages, and times! The vision of the text, moreover, tells us it is destined, on a yet vaster scale, to vindicate its title to be "the power of God unto salvation" unto the very ends of the earth—the grand fulcrum and lever in one which is to elevate degraded humanity. III. THE EXTENT OF THE COMMISSION: "To preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *The flight of the angel through heaven*:—I. THE SUBJECT OF HIS MINISTRATION: "The everlasting gospel." This blessing God designs by the Christian ministry to confer upon the whole world. 1. The heathen have lost the knowledge of God. We may infer the greatness of this loss from the fact that the knowledge of God is the only foundation of religion. But how can this knowledge be restored? It is only taught by three volumes—Nature, Providence, and Revelation. But Nature and Providence never taught this knowledge without the comment of Revelation. Nothing restores the lost knowledge of God but the gospel. 2. They are without the knowledge of their sinful state. 3. They are without the knowledge of acceptance and pardon through the true Mediator. II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS MINISTRY. 1. It is the ministry of men. The term "angel" is not a designation of nature, but of office; ministers are called angels in Holy Scripture. The ministry of the gospel is exercised by men, that they may not only teach doctrine, but be the witnesses of what they teach. 2. It is an authorised ministry. An "angel" is a messenger, and a messenger must be sent. The command of the Lord is, "Go ye into all the world," &c. 3. It is an open and undisguised ministry. St. Paul gloried in using "great plainness of speech." There is nothing in Christianity that requires concealment. 4. It is a zealous and successful ministry. The attitude of "flying," in which the angel is placed before us in the text, denotes zeal and activity; an eagerness to deliver the message, and to carry it into the remotest regions. And, thank God, we have such a ministry in progress. It has met with difficulties, and future difficulties await it, yet it is pressing onward. III. ITS EXTENSIVE COMMISSION. It is sent to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." 1. The gospel is equally needed by all nations, and equally adapted to all. 2. There is an essential difference between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. The Jewish dispensation was restricted to one nation and period; the Christian dispensation is universal, embracing all the different tribes of men, and extending to the end of time. 3. The extensive commission recorded in the text is the foundation of universal philanthropy. 4. It gives noble and expanded views to Christians. Study and understand your own religion. It is not one amongst many modifications of human opinion. It is from God, and it is intended by Him, like Aaron's rod, to swallow up every other. IV. THE SPECIFIC OBJECTS OF THE ANGEL'S MINISTRY. 1. The angel cries out, "Fear Him." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the source and guard of virtue. But the heathen are without it. They have religious fear, but not the fear of God. The fear of God is a mixture of awe and love. 2. To establish His worship. This is another effect of the promulgation of the gospel. Instead of idols, to place the true God in His temples. Instead of polluting orgies, to teach men to wash their hands in innocence, and thus to encompass God's altar. Instead of vain mediators, to have

the name of Jesus in which to trust. 3. To claim for God His revenue of praise and glory. Lessons: 1. Behold, then, a glorious object of contemplation—the progress of the angel in the midst of heaven. 2. It depends on you to speed or delay the angel. 3. Let it not discourage us, that the world may be tossed and troubled. (*R. Watson.*)

An ideal preacher:—I. HIS THEME IS GLORIOUS. 1. A gospel-message of Divine love. 2. An ever-enduring gospel. (1) Because its elementary truths are absolute. (2) Because its redemptive provisions are complete. 3. A world-wide gospel. (1) A necessity to all mankind. (2) Equal to all mankind. II. HIS MOVEMENTS ARE EXPEDITIOUS. 1. The message is urgent. 2. The time is short. 3. Life is uncertain. III. HIS SPHERE IS ELEVATED. It is the characteristic of all truly regenerated men that they are not of the flesh, but of the Spirit; that they set their affections on things above; that though in the world, they are not of the world; that they live in heavenly places. (*Homilist.*)

The dissemination of good and the destruction of evil:—I. THE DISSEMINATION OF GOOD. 1. The gospel in itself is good. It is at once the mirror and the medium of eternal good. 2. The gospel in its ministry is good. It comes from heaven, and is conveyed by heavenly messengers to men. 3. The gospel in its universality is good. It overleaps all geographic boundaries, all tribal, linguistic distinctions, and addresses man as man. 4. The gospel in its purpose is good. Its supreme aim is to induce all men to worship Him who made heaven, earth, and sea. II. THE DESTRUCTION OF EVIL. 1. This aggregation of evil must fall. Faith is to overcome the world. 2. This aggregation of evil falls as the good advances. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

The preaching of the everlasting gospel:—I. THE COMMISSION TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. Some persons are heard falsely to argue that there is no need to send the tidings of redemption to the heathen; that they will be saved or be lost, according to their use or abuse of the light they have received; and that to impart to them the gospel is only to increase their condemnation, if they die unbelieving. But to such cavils we need not reply. Our Lord's command, as well as the conduct of the angel in our text, is clear and express. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THAT COMMISSION IS TO BE EXECUTED. 1. By calling sinners to repentance. 2. By directing them to Christ. 3. By warning them of a future judgment. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*)

The undying theme—the originality and acceptability of the gospel:—1. The gospel, in its authorship, is one with nature. 2. The gospel, in its comprehension or extent, includes heaven and earth. The flying angel unites the two, and shows in clear and bold figure the celestial origin of the gospel. It is no growth of the darkened earth—no high stage of a merely natural development—no offspring of civilisation. Heaven and earth are made one again in the gospel. 3. The gospel, in its history, advances from the deepest obscurity to the highest prominence. 4. The gospel, in its design, unites the particular and the universal. 5. The gospel, in its spirit, unites the purest mercy with the most perfect justice. I. A STATEMENT OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Its originality. That is original which is the first of its kind, and stands alone. Absolute originality is to be found in God alone; for the Divine mind alone has the power of pure creation. The gospel is original, whether we view it as emanating from God, as a series of facts in human history, or as a new life in man—that is, whether we view it as a creation of God the Father, of God the Son, or of God the Holy Ghost. 2. Its acceptability lies in this—that it satisfies the demands of an honest and earnest mind. Is proof required that the Word of God, as a historical and literary production, is what it claims to be? It possesses more evidence on this point than any other book. But the point in respect of which the gospel is most widely and warmly accepted is that it satisfies the heart and conscience. II. HOW THE GOSPEL IS EVERLASTING. We may here take the two aspects under which we have just considered the gospel, and show how the epithet everlasting applies to each—how it is for ever original or new, and how it is for ever good or acceptable. 1. The gospel is everlasting in its originality. The word new has two meanings, not only different, but apparently opposed to each other, which yet, taken together, give all the more complete an idea of the gospel. We call that new which is the first of its kind; we also call that new which is the last or latest of its kind. The gospel is the first and last system of truth, the oldest and the newest thought of God. It is everlasting, although new. Other new things soon lose their freshness, wither, and grow old; but it remains ever new, full of the life of God, fresh as the morning of creation. It continues new by ever growing newer—ever leading us deeper into its source in God. 2. The gospel is everlasting in its acceptability. We do not grow insensible to its influence through repeated experience of its power. The more we come into living contact

with it, the more do we see its beauty and profundity—the more do we see that its meaning and charm are quite inexhaustible. (*F. Ferguson.*) *The missionary angel*:—1. It is the everlasting gospel, because it deals with everlasting things. It proclaims the everlasting God. 2. It is the everlasting gospel because it emanates from the everlasting God. 3. The everlasting gospel because it is based upon the everlasting covenant. 4. The everlasting gospel because it guarantees to us everlasting life, the life of communion; the life of knowledge, of entering more and more into the mind of God, and drawing our whole life's power from Him, the Lord our God. 5. The everlasting gospel because it is sure to bring to us everlasting joy. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*) *The everlasting gospel*:—I. THE ANGEL SPOKEN OF IS NOT MERELY AN INDIVIDUAL, BUT THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL FAITHFUL MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL. II. THE TITLE WHICH THE SPIRIT OF GOD HERE GIVES IT. It is called in our text “the everlasting gospel.” 1. It is called the everlasting gospel because the substance of it was settled in eternity by the triune Jehovah, in the counsel and in the covenant of peace. It is the revelation of the eternal purpose of God. 2. It is called the “everlasting gospel” because, in spite of all the opposition that has been offered to it, it has continued still to be preached, and it will always so continue. 3. Another reason is because, amidst all the changes to which this sublunary state is subject, the gospel alone is unchangeable, and alone affords a safe and solid foundation, on which the people of God can rest. 4. Once more, it is called “the everlasting gospel,” because all its promises “are yea and amen in Christ Jesus,” and never can be revoked. III. THE INSTRUMENTALITY EMPLOYED IN ITS PROMULGATION. IV. THE PREDICTED TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL. (*R. Shutte, M.A.*) *The everlasting gospel*:—Some one not long ago published a book with the title, “Gospels of Yesterday.” It discussed the writings of several authors who, in our generation, have caught the popular ear, and analysed their doctrines with keen incisiveness. At present I will not pass a judgment on its estimates. But how striking the name itself! “Gospels of Yesterday”—how many there have been of them! They lasted as long as they could, but the world outgrew them. There is only one gospel which is everlasting. Now, why is this? What makes the gospel of Christ everlasting? I. ITS UNIVERSAL MESSAGE. The reason why so many gospels have been doomed to become gospels of yesterday has been because they have addressed themselves to what is transient or partial in human nature, and not to what is permanent and universal. Men have been hailed as saviours of society because they have been able to give relief from a need pressing at some particular time, or because their doctrines have fallen in with some passing phase of popular sentiment. But the glory of Christianity is that its teaching is addressed to what is most characteristic in human nature and absolutely the same in all members of the human race, whether they be rich or poor, whether they inhabit the one hemisphere or the other, and whether they live in ancient or modern times. You have only to glance at the most outstanding words of the gospel to see this. Take, for example, the word soul. This word was in the very forefront of the teaching of Jesus. Jesus went down to the child, the beggar, the harlot—the weakest and most despised members of the human family; and when He was able to find even in them this infinitely precious thing, it was manifest that He had discovered the secret of a universal religion; because, if this existed even in the lowest, then it existed in all. Or take another great word of the message of the gospel: take the word sin. This word also is borne on the forefront of Christianity, and how universal is the response which it finds in the heart of man! Not to multiply illustrations too much, take only one more—the word eternity. This is also a word which the gospel carries on its very front. It speaks of it wherever it goes. Christ brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; He spoke of the objects of the world invisible as one who had lived among them; and He spoke to men of a home of many mansions to which they were to aspire. Now, this message strikes a chord in every human heart. II. ITS PARTICULAR MESSAGE. The great things in human nature are, as I have said, common to all; yet human nature is never precisely the same in any two specimens. There were never in this world even two faces absolutely alike; and much less are the minds ever precisely alike which lie behind the faces. The gifts of nature, such as beauty, strength, ability, genius, are distributed in ever-varying proportions, and the various circumstances in which people grow up emphasise the natural differences. Some are born to wealth, others to poverty; the gifts of some are improved by education, the genius of others is buried beneath the hard conditions of adversity. What a difference it makes in the fate of a human being whether he is born in the heart of Africa or in

the capital of England! But the gospel has a message for this difference in each specimen of human nature, and for each quarter of the globe and each age of the world, as well as for that which is common to all. God has a special message for every age. His gospel has a word in season for every condition of life—for the little child, and the young man in his prime, and for old age—a word for the multitude and a word for the few. The Chinese, when they accept the gospel, will find secrets in it which the British have never discovered; the twentieth century will discover phases of the Christian life which are lacking in the nineteenth. We have not exhausted Christ, and we have not exhausted the gospel of Christ. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

The gospel in terms of duration:—This word "gospel," we bethink us, gets only its modern form in our homelier phrase "good news." The word here linked with it, therefore, is scarcely the sort of word we would naturally link with it—"an eternal gospel." Eternal good news? The combination is one which strikes our ear as if it contradicted itself. News flashes and fades. How little is there that we would still call news after a day's sun has set upon it! Yet there is a sense in which news may be said sometimes to last. The news is so important to us that it lingers in the heart, and in a manner keeps itself fresh. The gospel is always new, because you are always gathering something further of its import, or sighting something hitherto unexplored of its sublimity.

I. THE GOSPEL HAS IN IT EVERY ELEMENT OF DURABILITY.

1. There are some enterprises, some houses of business so "safe," as you call them—so set for enduring—that even prudent men will count upon the future of them as if it were present. Such concerns are always conceived and conducted, you will find, on principles of wisdom—of wisdom that is calm and clear-sighted, fit to anticipate dangers and to provide for difficulties, so that surprise or loss is made as unlikely as may be. Such concerns, moreover, are usually built up slowly—grow firm as they grow great, and at every stage are solid all through to the heart. This element of durability belongs to the gospel. It took existence under a wisdom which was at once infinite in its range and eternal in its experience. The gospel was matured in sight of every difficulty and every danger it could ever meet. It has never shown the least kinship with things hasty, immature, unstable. It is built into the system of things, and is thus settled upon foundations that are too deep and broad to come within the power of any law of destruction or damage or change.
2. There is another important element of durability in the gospel. The Divine justice, it is evident—the eternal sense of what is morally due, and the eternal fulfilling of what is morally right—cannot afford to brook the least breath of contravention. Now, it is an eminent peculiarity of the gospel, that it stands in the most intimate harmony with justice. It is such, that whithersoever it goes supreme justice goes with it.
3. The gospel has still another element of durability. Purity is proof against decay; impurity is decay already begun. And the gospel is a holy thing. It sprang from holiness: it was framed upon holiness; it makes for holiness.
4. I will name only one thing more about the gospel which involves its enduringness. We count upon the success of an undertaking which has abundance of strength behind it. What project would we not reckon secure of a firm place in history if the flag of every nation were unfurled around it, and every heart was knit to every other in the resolve that it should prosper and last? But all our figures are poor when we bring them alongside of the fact concerning the strength which girds this gospel. It is the gospel of the Omnipotent. But is His gospel then omnipotent? Virtually it is.

II. The gospel may be called "eternal" because DURATION HITHERTO HAS BEEN SO FULL OF IT. The material universe, we have come to know, is stupendously great. Thought wearies itself in a wilderness of world-systems; and when our glasses have carried our vision farthest into the teeming depths of space, we more than conjecture that we have only been gazing around the horizon-line of an ocean of Divine handiwork. Yet, in the minds of those to whom both are equally known, the gospel bulks larger than this universe that is so nearly infinite. We catch stray echoes of the converse of mightier intelligences than time can hold—of beings who know creation with a knowledge which dwarfs all our science into the knowledge of children; and for once that they are thinking of God's creation they are ten times thinking of God's salvation. And this, we may assure ourselves, does no more than reflect the thought of the adorable Creator. The Lord of the gospel is the Lord of creation, and He is the Lord of creation as the Lord of the gospel—this actually now, and this potentially from "before the world began." This gospel would seem to be the oldest thing we know. For it has the look of being more than an eternal thought of the Divine mind, and more than an eternal purpose of the Divine will; it wears an appearance of completeness, of maturity, of readi-

ness, of actuality almost; it has gotten a prerogative of making a place for itself among eternal things, and of casting its own influence into the whole current of the immeasurable past. We listen on this sea-board of time, and the sound which reaches us out of the shoreless eternity is a gospel-sound. We are hearing the far-coming murmur of "an eternal gospel." III. The gospel may be spoken of as "eternal" because IT WILL ALWAYS BE WHAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN. No change is to be detected in its character or its contents through all the changes that have come to pass in its condition and its circumstances. It has not even developed, save in manifestation and in the spread of its influence among men. What, then, of the future? What of the coming generations of the history of the gospel in the world? These may see more of change than even the past generations have seen. Shall the gospel itself be touched with change? The Scriptures, which hold the revelation of it from the beginning, may come to be beheld in a light so searching, that venerable beliefs as to their formation may be universally modified. Meanwhile the gospel will stand as it has never but stood; and the total result of all new light, of all new movement, will be the more full and luminous display of what those tidings are which abide for ever. And is it so? Shall this gospel which we so poorly preach, and which men are so slow to hear—shall it be to some of us our theme, our motive, our inspiration, the breath of our life, when the first ages of redemption have gone far into the past? Still new?—and still the same? Even so. The same Saviour, the same great kinship to Him, the same clearing of the dark past, the same upward road to spiritual health and power, the same "everlasting righteousness," the same mercy, the same love, the same peace and joy made up to eternal measure—this, with deepening knowledge of what it all means, and ever-gathering enrichment from what it all infolds, will the gospel of Jesus Christ continue to be as long as eternity continues! IV. The gospel may be called "eternal," IN CONTRAST TO SO MUCH THAT IS ASSOCIATED WITH IT IN THE WORLD. Is there anything at all in the world that is unshifting and sure? We think little about the uncertainty of things, because we know so little else. Yet it would be a luxury, we imagine, to be able to fix our thought, not to say our hope or our love, upon something which will not catch the general infection of things as it gets into treacherous motion, or slips our grasp, or vanishes, leaving us to soothe as we can our aching hearts. It is this gospel. It is what brings us to the friendly stability of God as a personal and present and settled possession. For the good tidings, from generation to generation, from man to man, from experience to experience, abides the same enriching, comforting, rectifying thing, unable to disappoint or deceive. (*J. A. Kerr Bain, M.A.*) *The everlasting gospel*.—I. THE GOSPEL. It is a "glad message" from God to man; good news from heaven to earth. 1. Of God's free love. 2. Of God's great gift. 3. Of God's propitiation for sin. 4. Of God's righteousness. 5. Of God's kingdom. II. THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The survival of the fittest*.—I. BECAUSE IT GATHERS UP ALL THE TEACHINGS OF NATURE. II. BECAUSE IT FULFILLS ALL THE PREDICTIONS OF PROPHECY. III. BECAUSE IT MEETS THE UNIVERSAL WANTS OF MAN. IV. BECAUSE IT POSSESSES IMMORTAL YOUTH. V. BECAUSE IT IS EVER GAINING FRESH EMPIRE AND RENOWN. VI. BECAUSE ITS AUTHOR HAS RISEN AND REIGNS FOR EVER. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The gospel of retribution*.—1. What, then, is this gospel? It is the gospel of retribution; we are to fear and glorify God because the hour of His judgment is come. This is the truth which the angel flying in mid-heaven, between God and man, proclaims and always will proclaim. This is the truth which St. John calls "an eternal gospel"—not the gospel, and still less the only gospel, but still glad tidings of great joy to us and to all mankind. Are you disappointed? Do you say, "That is true enough, no doubt. Sooner or later the actions of men do round upon them in the strangest way. A man may as soon jump off his own shadow as evade the consequences of his own deeds. But we need no apostle, no angel out of heaven, to teach us that. Our poets, our moralists, our philosophers, our very novelists, have long sung in that key. And our own hearts, our consciences, our experience of life, have taken up and swelled the strain. We need no future witness to the fact of retribution. But there is no gospel in the fact. It brings no good tidings to us, but rather tidings of despair. A gospel of redemption would be good news indeed if it could possibly be true; but a gospel of retribution is a mere contradiction in terms." Are you so sure that every man must receive according to his deeds that you have made your ways and doings good, that you dread and resist every temptation to do evil? You respect and observe the law of gravity because you are quite sure that it is a law. Do you show an equal respect for the law of retribution? Consider,

again, if the law of retribution is familiar to you, is it nothing to you to be assured that what you admit to be a law is also a gospel? When we are told that God's judgments on sin are an eternal gospel, a gospel for all beings in all ages, what is implied? This is implied—and there is no truth more precious or more practical—that the judgments of God are corrective, disciplinary, redemptive; that they are designed to turn us away from the sins by which they are provoked. Nothing can be more wholesome for us, and no truer or nobler comfort can be given us when we are suffering the painful consequences of our evil deeds, than the assurance that these retributions are intended for our good; not to injure or destroy us, but to quicken life in us, or the godly sorrow which worketh life. And, surely, up to a certain point at least, we can see that this law is a good law, deterring us from evil, driving and inviting us toward that which is good. But if the law work good it is good; *i.e.*, it is a gospel as well as a law. It would be bad news that the law was to be repealed. That there is much in the operation of this law which as yet we cannot fathom, or cannot prove to be good, must be admitted. One man's guilt is another man's loss or pain. We often suffer as much from our ignorance as from our sins. The best people often have the hardest life. And here, as we cannot walk by sight we must walk by faith. Retribution is a gospel, an eternal gospel, because it is medicinal and redemptive, because it either corrects that which is evil in us, or because it is a discipline by which we are prepared for larger good. 2. But this mystery of unprovoked or disproportionate suffering may grow clearer to us as we consider that, in his eternal gospel, St. John includes not only present, but also future judgments. The angel is always proclaiming judgment, but he also proclaims "hours" of judgment, crises in which the whole story of a life, a race, or an age, is summed up, and finally adjusted by an unerring standard. Such an hour was then at hand. Such an hour is never far off from any one of us. No fact, no truth, proclaimed by Christ and by His angels or messengers, has been invested with more awful terrors than this of the last judgment—the last, or at least the last for us, the judgment which closes this earthly span. And, to flesh and blood, it must always be full of terror. And yet there are considerations which may well abate our surprise. For, with all his fear of judgment, there is a deep craving for justice in every man's heart, and a profound conviction that, in some respects at least, he has never had it, or never had it to the full. His neighbours have wronged him. He has had to suffer for their folly, their extravagance, their crimes, their sins. His actions have been misrepresented, his motives misconstrued. Or circumstances have been against him, and he has never been able to get the culture he longed for and prized. Poverty, drudgery, grief, and care have exhausted him, leaving him no leisure and no force for pursuing the loftier aims of life. Or he has been unfortunate in the relationships he has formed, and found them a burden instead of a help. As you all know, there are men who, in a thousand different ways, have been crippled, hampered, thwarted, defeated in the race of life, who have never had a fair chance, whose hearts have been shaken and soured by the accidents and changes of time. And if to any of these sufferers from misfortune or injustice, sitting in darkness and asking, "What does it all mean?" you could say with conviction and authority, "It means that the end is not yet; but the end is coming. God will yet do you ample justice, redress all your wrongs, compensate you for all your losses, turn all your sorrows into joy, make you what you would be, and enable you to do and to get all you crave"—would not such a message be a true gospel to him? If he could believe it, would it not be to him as life from the dead? Would he be slow to give glory unto God? And is it not good news that when we pass from the hasty censures of a busy and careless, if not a cruel, world, we shall be weighed in finer scales and a truer balance? that our most inward and delicate motives will be taken into account, as well as the blundering actions which so ill expressed them by One who knows us altogether, and reads the thoughts and intents of the heart? Fear God, then, and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment is coming and is nigh. You cannot help but fear Him, indeed, for His pure eyes must discern much evil in you which you have failed to detect; and at His bar you will have to answer for your injustice to your neighbours, for the wrongs you have done them, for your misconstructions of their characters, their actions, their motives. But, according to St. John, with fear or reverence we are to blend thanksgiving. According to him, retribution is a gospel as well as a law, and we are to give glory to God even as we advance toward His judgment-seat. How should either an apostle, or an angel, bid us bless God for the hour of judgment as for a gospel, if there were no mercy, no hope, no blessing in it? 3. This gospel is an eternal, or universal, gospel, a gospel

for all ages, for all men. It is proclaimed unto "every nation, and tribe, and tongue and people." And here, surely, we may find a theme for praise. The world is full of injustice, full of misery. And as you think of these common events, events as common in every other circle as in your own, what a gospel is this which the angel, flying in mid-heaven, proclaims with a great voice! "This world is not all. It is not the end, but only the beginning; and the beginnings of life are always obscure and mysterious. The hour of judgment is coming, in which the mystery will be explained and vindicated; in which God will redress every wrong, compensate every loss." Take the world as it is, cut it off from the great astronomical system of which it forms part, and it is a mystery which none can fathom. And take human life as it is, as a story without a sequel, and you can only give it up as an insoluble problem, a mighty maze without a plan. But listen to this gospel of retribution, connect this world with the world, or worlds, in heaven, regard the present life as an introduction to, a discipline for, a larger, happier life to come, and your burden is eased; the problem becomes capable of a happy solution. If you must still fear God, you can also give Him glory because the hour of His judgment is coming, the hour at which He will gather the whole world under His rule, and all nations and tribes, and tongues and peoples, shall become His people and know Him for their God. That this law of retribution has another aspect, that the justice of God must be full of terror for as many as cleave to their sins and will not let them go, none of us are likely to forget. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The gospel enduring* :—Mineralogists and geologists are predicting in doleful strains the exhaustion of coal. Even such an eminent Christian philosopher as Dr. Chalmers believed that the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of nature would fail to keep pace with the wants of a rapidly increasing population. But the gospel is eternal. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Amid all life's vicissitudes He is unalterable in love and power. There followed another angel, saying, *Babylon is fallen.—The doom of the world-power* :—The second angel follows on the first; the doom of the world-city, the metropolis of the empire of the world-power, follows the proclamation of the gospel. The principles of Christ's gospel must undermine the world-power: the fall of some Babylon principle has almost always succeeded the age of spiritual revival. Pagan Rome goes down before the gospel. (*Bp. Boyd Carpenter.*)

Vers. 9-12. **And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image.—Soul prostitution and soul loyalty** :—**I. SOUL PROSTITUTION.** 1. The prostitution of the soul to wrong is an alarming crime. 2. The prostitution of the soul to wrong always incurs lamentable suffering. The metaphors here are borrowed from the sacred books of the Hebrew people, and they convey the idea of suffering of an alarming kind, suggesting—(1) A consciousness of Divine antagonism. "Wine of the wrath of God." In the sense of malignant passion there is no wrath in Him who is love. But it is a psychological fact that the man who suffers because he has done another an injury, has a consciousness that the one he has offended is angry with him, and this consciousness is the chief element in his suffering. (2) A sense of intense agony. "Shall be tormented with fire and brimstone." Brimstone adds intensity to the heat and fury to the flames of fire. "My punishment is greater than I can bear," said Cain. A guilty conscience has its Tartarus or Gehenna within itself. (3) A state of constant restlessness. "They have no rest day nor (and) night." There is no rest in sin. "The wicked are like the troubled sea." **II. SOUL LOYALTY.** "Here is the patience of the saints." What is patience? It is not insensibility. Some people are lauded for their patience who should be denounced for their stoicism and indifference. Patience implies at least two things. (1) The existence of trials. Patience lives only in difficulty and danger, in storms and tempests. (2) The highest mental power. Man's highest power of mind is seen not in unsurpassed mechanical inventions, or the sublimest productions of art, not in the most baffling and confounding strategies of bloody war, but in the successful effort to govern all the impulses and master all the boisterous passions of the human soul. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.—Hell** :—**I. WE AFFIRM THERE IS A HELL; PUNISHMENTS FINITE IN DEGREE, BUT INFINITE IN DURATION.** 1. Scripture gives no countenance to this absurd opinion, that the wicked shall have no part in resurrection and judgment (Rom. iii. 4, 5; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xx. 12, 13, 15; John v. 28, 29). 2. Scripture clearly affirms that the punishment of the damned shall not consist of annihilation, but of real and sensible pain (Matt. xxvi. 24;

xi. 24). Scripture-images of hell, which are many, will not allow us to confine future punishment to annihilation. It is a worm, a fire, a darkness; they are chains—weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. 3. It appears by Scripture that future punishment will be eternal (Matt. xxv. 41; Mark ix. 44; Matt. xviii. 8; Rev. xx. 10). II. IF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IMPLY A CONTRADICTION, IT MUST EITHER REGARD MAN, THE SUFFERER OF THE PAIN, OR GOD, WHO THREATENS TO INFLICT IT. 1. The nature of man hath nothing incongruous with that degree and duration of punishment of which we speak. 2. Let us attend now to objections taken from the nature of God. A man, who opposeth our doctrine, reasons in this manner. Which way soever I consider a Being supremely perfect, I cannot persuade myself that He will expose His creatures to eternal torments. All His perfections secure me from such terrors as this doctrine seems to inspire. In short, when I consider God under the idea of an equitable legislator, I cannot comprehend how sins committed in a finite period can deserve an infinite punishment. (1) Observe this general truth. It is not probable God would threaten mankind with a punishment, the infliction of which would be incompatible with His perfections. (2) Take each part of the objection drawn from the attributes of God, and said to destroy our doctrine, and consider it separately. The argument taken from the liberty of God would carry us from error to error, and from one absurdity to another. For, if God be free to relax any part of the punishment denounced, He is equally free to relax the whole. The difficulty taken from the goodness of God vanisheth when we rectify popular notions of this excellence of the Divine nature. Goodness in men is a virtue of constitution which makes them suffer when they see their fellow creatures in misery, and which excites them to relieve them. In God it is a perfection independent in its origin, free in its execution, and always restrained by laws of inviolable equity and exact severity. Justice is not incompatible with eternal punishment. It is not to be granted that a sin committed in a limited time ought not to be punished through an infinite duration. It is not the length of time employed in committing a crime that determines the degree and the duration of its punishment, it is the turpitude and atrociousness of it. The justice of God, far from opposing the punishment of the impenitent, requires it. Were we to examine in this manner each part of the objection opposed against our doctrine, we should open a second source of solutions to answer it. (3) The doctrine of degrees of punishment affords us a third. There is an extreme difference between a heathen and a Jew; there is an extreme distance between a Jew and a Christian; and a greater still between a Christian and a heathen. The gospel-rule is, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Take this principle which Scripture establisheth in the clearest manner; press home all its consequences; extend it as far as it can be carried; give scope even to your imagination till the punishments which such and such persons suffer in hell are reduced to a degree that may serve to solve the difficulty of the doctrine of their eternity; whatever system ye adopt on this article, I will even venture to say whatever difficulty ye may meet with in following it, it will be always more reasonable, I think, to make of one doctrine clearly revealed a clue to guide through the difficulties of another doctrine clearly revealed too, than rashly to deny the formal decisions of Scripture. I mean to say, it would be more rational to stretch the doctrine of degrees too far, if I may venture to speak so, than to deny that of their eternity. (4) The fourth source of solutions is a maxim from which a divine ought never to depart, and which we wish particularly to inculcate among those who extend the operations of reason too far in matters of religion. Our maxim is this. We know, indeed, in general, what are the attributes of God, but we are extremely ignorant of their sphere, we cannot determine how far they extend. We know, in general, God is free, He is just, He is merciful. But we are too ignorant to determine how far these perfections must go, because the infinity of them absorbs the capacity of our minds. Apply this to our subject. The idea of hell seems to you repugnant to the attributes of God, you cannot comprehend how a just God can punish finite sins with infinite pain; how a merciful God can abandon His creature to eternal miseries. Your difficulties have some probability, I grant. Your reasons, I allow, seem well grounded. But dost thou remember the attributes of God are infinite? Remember, thy knowledge is finite. You think future punishment inconsistent with the attributes of God, but your notion of inconsistency ought to vanish at the appearance of Scripture-light. III. OBSERVE THE QUALITY AND THE DURATION OF THE PUNISHMENTS OF HELL. 1. The quality of the punishments of hell is expressed in these terms—smoke, torment. These metaphorical terms include five ideas,

Privation of heavenly happiness, sensation of pain, remorse of conscience, horror of society, increase of crime. 2. It remains only that we consider the length and duration of them. But by what means shall we describe these profound articles of contemplation? Can we number the innumerable and measure that which is beyond all mensuration? Can we make you comprehend the incomprehensible? And shall we amuse you with our imaginations? (*J. Saurin.*)

Vers. 12, 13. Here is the patience of the saints.—*Patient waiting upon God* :—The duty, necessity, and good effects of patience are often set forth in the Word of God. This is the more remarkable, because, by the wisdom of the world, patience, unless accompanied by selfish cunning, or a proud contempt of others, is regarded rather as a weakness than a virtue. Evangelical or spiritual patience is not mere resignation to the ills of life and the dispensations of providence, nor mere perseverance in the path of duty, although neither of these can really exist without it. It is something more than either, or than both combined, that is described in Scripture as the characteristic patience of the saints, or, as it is frequently expressed, their patient waiting upon God. In those parts of Scripture where the duty of waiting upon God is enforced, the idea of serving Him is certainly implied, but the primary meaning of the phrase is that of waiting for, expecting God, His presence, His favour, the fulfilment of His promises, as well as the utterance of His commands. This patient waiting upon God is represented not only as acceptable to Him, and as a source of good in general, but of specific benefits, without which spiritual life can never flourish, if it can exist. For example, it is represented as a source of strength, that is, spiritual strength, the power of performance, and endurance, and resistance; of withstanding evil, and of doing good (*Isa. xl. 31*). So far from warning us against excess in the employment of this means for the recruiting of our spiritual strength, the Scripture points it out as the highway to perfection (*James i. 4*). It is presented, likewise, as the only security against the disappointment and frustration of our strongest confidence and highest trust. Is it then a mere inert quiescence, a stagnation of the soul, without affection or activity, that God's Word sets before us, as a duty, as a necessary source of strength, and as the highway to perfection? Such a conclusion is well suited to the tendency of human nature to extremes; but if it were correct the apostle could never have used such a combination (*Heb. vi. 12*). The patience that is heir to the promises of God is therefore not a mere negation, not a stagnant patience, not a slothful patience. It is urged on to action by a potent principle, the love of God, without which patient waiting, in the true sense, is impossible (*2 Thess. iii. 5*). But this Divine love may itself be personated by a mere inert affection, or by a corrupt one, which refuses to be subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. He has therefore taught us that obedience to His will is an essential characteristic of true patience. "Wait on the Lord," and "keep His way," that is, walk in the way of His commandments, are inseparable precepts, forming, not severally, but together, the condition of the promise, "He shall exalt thee to inherit the land" (*Psa. xxxvii. 34*). They for whom glory, and honour, and immortality, and eternal life are reserved, are they who seek it, not simply by patient continuance, but "by patient continuance in well doing" (*Rom. ii. 7*). "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may inherit the promise" (*Heb. x. 36*). The patience of the saints, then, is neither an inactive nor a lawless patience, but a loving and obedient patience. It is through faith and patience, a patient trust and a believing patience, that the saints in glory have inherited the promises. From such a faith hope is inseparable. He who would not be slothful, but a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, must do so by "showing diligence" in every duty "to the full assurance of hope unto the end" (*Heb. vi. 11*). The faith and hope which are thus represented as essential to the patience of the saints, are not merely a vague trust and expectation, founded upon no sufficient reason, or simply on the attributes of God, or His promises in general, without regard to the restrictions and conditions by which they are accompanied, but a specific trust and expectation, having a definite object, reason, and foundation. We have seen already that the exercise of Christian patience is described in Scripture as a patient waiting, not for something unknown, not for evil, not for good in the general, but for God. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (*Isa. xxx. 18*). It might be asked how or why should men wait for or expect the Lord? He will be for ever what He is. He will be for ever, as He is now, intimately present to His creatures. But the definite object of the true believer's patient expectation is the

manifestation of God's mercy in His own salvation, in His complete and final deliverance from suffering and from sin. "Wait on the Lord, and He will save thee" (Prov. xx. 22). "It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." But even here, the expectation of the Christian might be too vague to secure the exercise of genuine patience. He might look to God for salvation, but without understanding how it was to be procured, or how it could be reconciled with the Divine justice. While this doubt or ignorance existed, he could hardly rest with implicit trust even on God's mercy, and could not therefore be expected to possess his soul in patience. The only remedy for this uneasiness and restlessness of spirit is a just apprehension, not only of God's nature as a merciful Being, but of the precise way in which His mercy can and will be exercised, in which He can be just and yet justify the ungodly. In other words, the soul must not only see God as He is in Himself, but see Him in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them, but imputing them to Christ; making Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The man whose hope is fixed, not on abstractions or on generalities, not even on the attributes of God, as such, nor on His promises at large, but on the positive, distinct, specific promise of justification and salvation even to the chief of sinners, who renounces his own righteousness and submits to the righteousness of God, by a simple trust in the righteousness of Christ, that man may indeed be said to "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. v. 5). The attitude of that soul is indeed one of waiting, of patient waiting, of patient waiting for God, of patient waiting for the salvation of the Lord, of "love to God and patient waiting for Christ." (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*)

The triumphs of patience:—I. God has always a people for His name; He owns them to be saints; and they are often found where we should little expect to find them. They are called holy for two reasons. 1. The first is taken from their dedication to God. 2. The second is derived from their personal renovation. The instruments under the law were only holy by appropriation. No change passed upon them. It is otherwise with us; we must be "made meet for the" great "Master's use." Hence regeneration is necessary. II. ON THE CONNECTION THERE IS BETWEEN SAINTS AND PATIENCE. 1. Saints only have patience. A man may endure, and not be patient; there may be no religious principle or motive to influence him; it may be a careless indolence; a stupid insensibility; a kind of mechanical or constitutional fortitude; a daring stoutness of spirit resulting from fatalism, philosophy, or pride. Christian patience is another thing; it is derived from a Divine agency; it is nourished by heavenly truth; it is guided by Scriptural rules. 2. Every saint possesses patience. They do not indeed possess it in equal degrees. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit; it is an essential part of the Divine image restored in man. 3. It highly becomes saints to cultivate patience. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price." It ennobles the possessor. It recommends his religion. It carries along with it a peculiar conviction. III. SOME CASES IN WHICH THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS IS TO BE RENDERED ILLUSTRIOUS AND STRIKING. 1. It is to be displayed in bearing provocation. "It must needs be that offences will come." Our opinions, reputations, connections, offices, businesses, render us widely vulnerable. (1) His peace requires it. People love to sting the passionate. (2) His wisdom requires it. "He that is slow to anger is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly. Anger resteth in the bosom of fools." (3) His dignity requires it. "It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression." (4) It is also required by examples the most worthy of our imitation. 2. Patience is to be displayed in suffering affliction. 3. Patience is to be exercised under delays. (*W. Jay.*)

The faith of Jesus.—*The faith of Jesus:*—Those words ought to describe the Church of Christ at all times. Three characteristics: patience—"waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; "keeping the commandments of God"—holiness of living; "keeping the faith of Jesus"—that of which St. Paul speaks at the end of his troubled life. Now, what is meant by "the faith," "the faith of Jesus"? Is it not just this? The twelve apostles, whom Jesus gathered round Himself, watched His life, heard His words, weighed His claims, until at last, when He put the great question to them, "Whom say ye that I am?" one of them, speaking for the rest, was able to say, "Thou art the Christ," &c. That was a formulated declaration of faith in regard to the Person of Jesus Christ. It was the first Christian creed, and He declared, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." The faith of Jesus, then, being a definite thing, capable of and necessitating accurate definition

in terms, it was obviously essential that there should be some short, comprehensive formula, which could be thus used at the baptism of converts. Undoubtedly some such form or forms did exist even before the books of the New Testament were written. In St. Paul's Epistles there are distinct allusions to these. "The form of sound words" which he bids Timothy "hold fast," is certainly some definite formula in use; and the "deposit" ("that committed to thee" it is rendered in our translation) which he bids Timothy to keep, is clearly the same thing. To us Anglican Churchmen that "Rule of Faith" is the Apostles' Creed. One or two things, then, I may surely say to those whose entire Christian position rests upon this faith of Jesus, and upon this early form of confessing it. 1. You will, of course, thoroughly understand it—the Apostles' Creed. You will take pains to do so. (1) You will know, then, its history. I mean the history of its actual form. (2) And, again, we should understand the substance of the creed. It is, indeed, little else than the gospel narrative thrown into a short form. 2. And, secondly, having this creed, pledged as we are to this creed, we should know not only its history, and its meaning, but we should know its value. It is, indeed, a most precious heritage. I might remind you of Mr. Keble's words, "Next to a sound rule of faith, there is nothing of so much consequence as a sober standard of feeling in practical religion, and it is the peculiar happiness of the Church of England to possess in her authorised formularies an ample and secure provision for both." 3. Last of all, we must regard our Christian creed as final. It is "the faith of Jesus," "the faith once delivered to the saints." It is the perpetual reiteration of St. Peter's early creed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and it must hold good for all time, till He shall come again "who is the faithful Witness and the First-begotten of the dead." "Here," around this creed of His universal Church, this creed which you and I profess,—"here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (*Canon Gough.*) Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.—*A glance into the world to come*:—Why are those happy that die in the Lord? Two reasons: "They rest from their labours," and "their works follow them." "They rest." That is, doubtless, a happiness which is something negative, but which is none the less of great value. Who does not know by experience what sweetness there is in rest coming after fatigue? The present life is every moment a fatigue, from which death is an eternal rest; rest from labour, rest from sufferings, rest from sin. But the happiness of those who have died in the Lord is not merely negative. They are not only freed from the fatigues and the trials of life, they enjoy a boundless felicity. That is what the Holy Spirit declares in our text, when it is said that "their works follow them." There exists a close connection between the present life and the life to come; the latter is, as it were, the continuation and the accomplishment of the former; the character of the life to come is determined in the case of each one by that of his present life. His faith bears its fruits in that other life, and it is changed into sight; he contemplates and he touches what he had believed. Here below, he saw the truth confusedly, and as through an obscure medium; but, sustained by faith, he advanced in peace in the midst of the perplexities of life; he waited with patience the great day of revelations; he accepted as good and full of love dispensations which he understood not. And now, to recompense his faith, he sees face to face; every veil is removed, all obscurities dissipated. To his view, which is illuminated from on high, the whole of the magnificent plan of God towards the world is all unfolded, and everywhere he discovers wonders of wisdom and of love. The most unsearchable, the most painful dispensations of the present life appear to him in the life to come the wisest and most paternal; and who can tell the transports of admiration and of holy joy into which that revelation of the ways of God casts him! His submission to the Divine will follows him equally after death; it bears its fruit in the life to come, and it is changed into happiness. It is very little to say that he is for ever delivered from the trials of every kind; these trials give place not only to rest, but to unspeakable enjoyments. We have said how the works of the people of God become after their death elements of their felicity; but there is yet another sense in which it can be said that these works follow them in the eternal life. Their works still follow them in this sense, that they continue in heaven that life of devotedness to the Saviour, and of activity for His service, which they commenced on earth. The happiness of heaven will not be a barren inaction; it will be an essentially active happiness. They will take part, in a manner which we cannot picture here below, in the work of God and in the government of the universe;

perhaps each of them will have, as here below, special aptitudes, which God will make the most of, by assigning to each of them particular occupations in harmony with these aptitudes. In order to be able to apply the promises of my text, we must therefore die in the Lord. 1. To die in the Lord is, in the first place, to die in the faith of the Lord; it is to renounce all hope of salvation founded on ourselves, on our works, on our pretended merits, and to cause our hopes to rest only on the merits of Christ, on the atonement accomplished by His blood. 2. To die in the Lord is also to die in the love of the Lord; it is to love Him Who loved us first, and that unto the Cross; it is to feel ourselves drawn to Him by an intimate and powerful affection; it is, when dying, to be able to say with St. Paul; "I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." 3. To die in the Lord is once more to die in obedience to the Lord. It is to die after having lived here below in imitation of Jesus Christ; after having purified ourselves as He also is pure; it is to have lived, I do not say in a state of perfect holiness, but at least in the constant desire of holiness, making continual efforts to reach it, and approaching it more and more. 4. In fine, and to say all in one single word, to die in the Lord is to die in communion with the Lord; it is to die, after having lived, dead to the world and to sin, with a life "hid with Christ in God." (*H. Monod.*) *A voice from heaven*:—I. THE CHARACTER. 1. "Here is the patience of the saints." To be blessed when we die we must be saints. By nature we are sinners, and by grace we must become saints if we would enter heaven. Since death does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. The word "saint" denotes not merely the pure in character, but those who are set apart unto God, dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses—by being, in fact, consecrated to God alone. Do you belong to God? Do you live to glorify Jesus? "But how am I to attain to holiness?" You cannot rise to it save by Divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. 2. But the glorified are also described in our text as patient ones. "Here is the patience of the saints," or, if you choose to render it differently, you may lawfully do so—"Here is the endurance of the saints." Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. If we are to win the glory we must be faithful unto death. "Here is the patience of the saints"; it cometh not by nature; it is the gift of the grace of God. 3. Farther on these saints are described as "they that keep the commandments of God." 4. The next mark of the blessed dead is that they kept "the faith of Jesus." Do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith, lest ye be like some in old time, who "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and were utterly cast away. 5. Notice that these people continue faithful till they die. For it is said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life. 6. Those who thus entered into rest exercised themselves in labours for Christ. For it is said, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward. 7. To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord were in the Lord. That is the great point. They could not have died in the Lord if they had not lived in the Lord. But are we in the Lord? Is the Lord by faith in us? II. THE BLESSEDNESS which is ascribed to those who die in the Lord. "They rest from their labours." 1. By this is meant that the saints in heaven rest from such labours as they performed here. There we shall not teach the ignorant, or rebuke the erring, or comfort the desponding, or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error, or do battle against the tempter of youth. 2. They rest from their labours in the sense that they are no longer subject to the toil of labour. Whatever they do in heaven will yield them refreshment, and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find in holy activity their serenest repose. 3. They rest also from the woe of labour, for I find the word has been read by some "they rest from their wailing." 4. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that when we reach our heavenly home we shall rest from the faults of our labours. We shall make no mistakes there, never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or want of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. 5. We shall there rest from the discouragements of our labour. There no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardour, or accuse us of evil motives; no desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong, and obdurate when our confidence is firm. 6. It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to rest from all contentions amongst our fellow Christians. III. THE REWARD of the blessed dead. "They rest from their

labours, and their works do follow them." They do not go before them; they have a forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and His finished work have led the way. Jesus goes before, works follow after. Note well, that the works are in existence and are mentioned; immortality and honour belong to them. No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a mite cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend—all these are things which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

A letter from heaven:—It is a brief letter, with only five lines, but each one most sweet.

I. THE FIRST LINE: THAT THE UNION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE CONTINUES THROUGH DEATH—"die in the Lord." When a ship enters the harbour, after the long and stormy voyage, the captain pays off the crew. If they wish to go on that ship again, they must reshew. But the godly have signed articles to die. The Lord does not pay them off when they are going to die—they die in His employ. They die in the service, beneath the care and look of the Master; and He will have His people to die aright. II. THE SECOND LINE: THAT THE SAINTS AFTER DEATH GO TO REST. It is impossible to rest and to make progress; one of the two can alone be had here. I have seen a tired traveller mounted on a milestone—to rest, apparently. He looked weary, and his parcel lay at the foot of the milestone. I do not know how long he had been there, but I know that whenever he started he had nine miles to go to the next town—it was that on the milestone. But yonder they rest—not from work, but from labour. They grow, and yet they rest; they rest, and yet grow. "They shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

III. THE THIRD LINE: THAT THE WORKS OF THE SAINTS FOLLOW THEM. Many work on materials that cannot follow them to eternity. The artist for months works on the canvas: he dies, and leaves the portrait behind him. The sculptor works on the marble for years: dies, and leaves the sculpture behind. But the good man works on a material that will bear transferring to the other world without receiving any damage. He draws beautiful lines—draws them upon his own soul, upon himself. He has sought the best material to work on, that will last when the rocks melt. And their work in others will remain; it is cut deep enough, so that it shall be visible in the judgment. Many work upon objects which they will leave behind. True, that the lands must be tilled, and minerals raised, and iron wrought; but it is not as a farmer, or miner, or carpenter, or astronomer, or geologist, that any man passed into eternity.

IV. THE FOURTH LINE: THAT THE STATE OF THE SAINTS AFTER DEATH IS A STATE OF BLISS. What kind of a country would you like to emigrate into? 1. A pleasant country, with beautiful landscapes? Such is heaven—an "inheritance in the light." 2. A plentiful country, without scarcity or want, never lacking any good thing? Such is heaven—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." 3. A healthy country? So is heaven—"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." "Sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

V. THE FIFTH LINE: THAT IT IS TO CONTINUE SO. "From henceforth." Parents have often received a letter from their children in America or Australia; but they will still say that they are expecting the mail every day, to hear again. Why? Because the country is changeable. Though all was well when the last letter was sent, things may have changed. But as to heaven, a single letter is as good as if you had one every day. There it is always the same—"from henceforth."

(*D. Roberts, D.D.*) *Heaven's description of the sainted dead*:—I. HEAVEN'S

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF THE SAINTED DEAD. They "die in the Lord." Their character was that of vital union with Christ. This union may include two things—1. Their existence in His affections. Christ's disciples live in Him; they are in His heart; He thinks upon them; He plans for them; He works for them; He causes all things to work together for their good. 2. Their existence in His character. Without figure, we live in the character of those we admire and love. Arnold's most loyal pupils live in his character now. We see their old master in their books, and hear him in their sermons. Christ is the grand object of their love, and the chief subject of their thought, and to please Him was the grand purpose of their life. II. HEAVEN'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CONDITION OF THE SAINTED DEAD.

1. Their blessedness is in rest from all trying labour. Not rest from work, for work is the condition of blessedness; but from all trying labour, all anxious toil, all wearying, annoying, irritating, fruitless toil. (1) Rest from all trying labour pertaining to our physical subsistence. (2) Rest from all trying labour pertaining to intellectual culture. How much trying labour is there here to train our faculties, and to get knowledge. (3) Rest from all trying labour

pertaining to our spiritual cultivation. (4) Rest from all trying labour to benefit our fellow-men. To do good here is a trying work. Not so yonder. 2. Their blessedness is in the influence of their works. No one act truly done for Christ, and in His spirit, will be lost. 3. Their blessedness begins immediately after death. "From henceforth." Not from the waking of the soul into consciousness after the sleep of centuries; not from the extinction of purgatorial fires—but from death. "To-day shalt thou be with Me." 4. Their blessedness is vouched by the Spirit of God. He who knows the present and future; He who hears the last sigh of every saint on earth, and his first note of triumph. The Spirit saith it. Let us believe it with an unquestioning faith. The Spirit saith it: let us adore Him for His revelation. (*Homilist.*) *The blessedness of the dead in Christ*:—I. Our first question, then, is—"How is this heavenly blessedness ATTESTED?" We all profess to believe in heaven. How do we know that there is such a place and such a state? If we cannot give a good answer, the Apostle John could. "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!" "Mere enthusiasm!" you say, "the wish was father to the thought. He only dreamt in that lonely isle, and turned the vision into a reality!" A strange delusion surely that could give visions, so coherent, so far-reaching, so sublime! Could he have written all this, even had he wished it, without inspiration from God? And consider what had gone before in the history of the apostle. He had lived amidst wonders, which he could not but believe, and of which he had been a great part himself. He had kept company with One who professed to come down from heaven, and who had opened His mouth to describe it. Had we lived all that this Galilean fisherman lived through, should we have doubted? But this testimony, thus of an outward kind, has next an inward voucher to its own authenticity. It bears the stamp of the heaven, whence it professes to come. It is, you say, only a dream. Did ever mortal man, outside of the Word of God, dream thus of the heavenly blessedness? Here is not the Greek or Roman heaven, such as we have in its brightest form in the sixth book of the *Æneid* of Virgil; for this is a heaven of eating and drinking, of running and wrestling, of expatiating in green fields, and basking in the sunshine. This is not the old Scandinavian or Teutonic heaven of eternal battles and immortal drunkenness. Here is not the Mohammedan heaven of feasting and sensual pleasure. Now, we see what kind of a heaven is congenial to men's natural fancy, and how different the heaven of the Bible would have been, had it been the creation of man. Here is a heaven of holiness and purity; of likeness to God, and fellowship with Christ, of eternal contemplation, worship, and praise! Did this dream, then, come out of the human mind and heart? Nor is this all the evidence that we have for the existence of heaven. The Spirit says, "Yea!" in a manner, if possible, more emphatic. It is not only in books that we read of heaven, even in that Book, which is above all. There is a testimony in living Epistles, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. This is our third evidence of there being a heavenly world, what may be called the evidence from Christian character. Had you been in company with the Apostle John, you would have said, Here is heaven begun! Suppose that this man still somewhere survive, and that there are others of the like character, who equally outlast the stroke of death, and meet in the same region, where they can reveal their character to each other, would there not be already many of the elements of heaven? And to crown all, let us suppose that it is the region whither Christ in soul and body is gone; and what would be wanting to make heaven essentially complete? As coals when thrown together and kindled make a fire, so must saints after death, in all the warmth of their love, when together with each other and with their Lord, awake the blessedness of heaven. We see the prophecy of this, in the renewed character and happy intercourse of Christians in the Church below. Let these then be reasons to us for the existence of this "land of pure delight"; and whoever may neglect it, whoever may discredit it, let us not be disobedient to the heavenly vision, but labour to enter into this rest! II. This leads now to our second topic, raised by the second question—"How is THIS HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS GAINED?" It clearly lays down two things as needful to the inheritance of the skies. The one is faith; and the other is holy obedience. 1. Faith, then, is needful to give a title to the heavenly blessedness: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Faith is necessary to secure union to the Lord. Men simply as men are not savingly united to the Lord; and therefore cannot die blessed in Him. This is a connection that needs to be acquired; and to those to whom the gospel comes, it is acquired by faith in Christ (John i. 12; Gal. iii. 26; Rom. viii. 1; John viii. 24;

John xiv. 5; 1 Cor. i. 30). 2. The second point as to the means by which the heavenly blessedness is gained is the necessity of holy obedience. Beautifully has it been said, that the good works of Christians do not go before them to open heaven, but they must follow after, to make it a place of blessedness; for the spirit of heaven is the spirit that brings forth good works below; and thus "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." III. We now come to our third question—How is THIS HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS TO BE ENJOYED? The answer is, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." 1. There is, first, the rest of the worker. It is not sloth, torpor, or inactivity. God forbid. That would be no heaven to an Elijah, a Paul, a Luther, a Wesley, and many more. But it is rest; rest the most pure, refreshing, and exalted. Who that knows anything of Christian labour in its highest forms—the labour of the Christian parent, who travails as in birth till Christ be formed in the hearts of all His children; the labour of the teacher, who regards the welfare of the soul as inseparable from the growth of the mind, but will appreciate this delightful and soul-soothing prospect of rest! No more out amidst the billows, toiling in rowing for that the wind is contrary, but at last in smooth water, and with the ripple breaking on the shore! No more down in the mine, with the hard and painful routine of grimy toil amidst darkness, and fire-damp, and rocky hindrances at every turn, but aloft in the pure air, the soiled raiment laid aside for the Sabbath dress, and the song and melody of the sanctuary filling each weary sense! The rest spoken of in this text is a "Sabbatism"; the keeping of an endless Sabbath, with its holy calm for ever unbroken, as fresh as when, in its virgin beauty, it first dawned upon the emancipated spirit, recalling Eden with its dews and flowers, but without trail of the serpent upon them, since for the redeemed all the sanctities of that higher paradise are over-arched and guarded by the "rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald." 2. But the second element of blessedness, and one which in the case of the Christian worker, is more positive, is the continued influence of the work. "Their works do follow them." It is delightful to think of the perpetuity of all goodness. It is not too much to say that a truly good action, an action done from true love to it, and from a regard to the will and glory of God in it, lasts for ever. You are tempted to give an angry look. The memory of Christ restrains you; and you give a kind and loving one; and that glance—though sent forth in a moment of time, will be fixed as in a picture to all eternity. Nor are these influences for good that we have all received only to be traced back to persons of position and prominence in the true Church of God. The humblest have wrought with them. The history of the Church in regard to the influence of its members can only be written in the world of immortality; and what secrets of domestic, of congregational, and even of world-wide Christian import shall then be unveiled, where there is no fear of jealousy or misunderstanding being aroused, or of sensitive delicacy being offended. Much of the blessedness of heaven will arise from these disclosures, and from the endless bonds which they shall seal! In the light of these undying soul-relationships the labour of the way shall be forgotten. Such is the perpetuity of moral influence, and of its final disclosure; for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known! And with all the other following of the good works of the righteous, let us not forget its influence upon themselves; for what are we but what our works make us? What on earth or what in heaven? We live in the atmosphere of our own actions, and if we have lived to God and to Christ, the work tells upon ourselves, more than upon all besides; and the spirit that prompted it is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life! If these things be so, let us not mourn the dead that "die in the Lord." Shall we mourn rest, freedom, blessedness? How can any of us be satisfied till we seek and obtain, through union to Christ, the comfortable hope that we are in the Lord, and that through His grace, our works, with all their failures and shortcomings, are so wrought in Him as to leave a memorial of the right kind behind! (*John Cairns, D.D.*) *The blessedness of dying in the Lord*:—I. CONSIDER WHAT WE MAY UNDERSTAND BY DYING IN THE LORD. 1. Dying in the righteousness of Christ. By dying in His righteousness, understand dying interested in that atonement, which our Lord Jesus Christ has made for all such as believe upon Him. 2. Dying in the image of Christ. We are also to bear a resemblance to Him, and to be conformed to Him as our holy example. 3. Dying in union with Christ. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF SUCH AS DIE IN THE LORD. 1. They are blessed in a freedom from troubles and sorrows. 2. They are blessed in their enjoyment of positive glory and happiness. (*T. Gibbons, D.D.*)

The Christian's death:—I. DEATH IS A CURSE. My text, no doubt, says, "Blessed are the dead," still death is a curse. The lower creatures die, but with how little pain! in what happy ignorance! Death springs on them with a tiger's leap. The coming event casts no shadow before. I have seen a lamb go gambolling on its way to the slaughter-house cropping the wayside flowers. The bravest men are afraid of death; and true bravery lies not in insensibility to its terrors, but in facing what we fear. It is an easy thing for a soldier, amid the whirl and excitement of a battle-field, to dash on the serried bayonets; but show me the man, unless a true, lofty, strong-minded Christian, who will, calmly and undauntedly, meet his dying hour. Ah! this fate, from which nature shrinks with instinctive horror, tries the courage of the bravest, and the piety of the best of men. Separate and apart from the consolations of Christian faith, death is a tremendous evil. Nature shrinks from it, shuddering. I do not like to think of being a cold, pale, inanimate form of clay, unconscious of the love and grief of all around me; screwed down into a narrow coffin. Nor is that all; the grave is the land of oblivion; and who does not shrink from the thought of being forgotten? Besides these sad imaginings, the sufferings that usually attend the close of life and gather like heavy clouds around its setting sun, make death a curse. II. DEATH IS A BLESSING. How true these words—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!" A union that, more intimate than marriage which unfaithfulness in either party dissolves; a union that, more intimate than the connection between body and soul which a slight accident may endanger, which an ounce of lead, an inch of steel, a drop of poison, a wrong step, the hand of a child may dissolve; a union that, more intimate than binds together those sections of the Church which, though differing, co-operate. The union which is formed between Christ and His people being one of incorporation, and not one merely of co-operation, what the one is, the other is; and where the one is, the other is; and as the one feels, the other feels; and as our bodies and their limbs have blood in common, or the branches and trunk of a tree have sap in common, so Jesus and His people have all things in common. To be in Christ, therefore, to be in the Lord, implies that we shall infallibly enjoy all the blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which He shed His blood to purchase; these being secured to us by the great oath of God, and the bonds of a covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. With Christ we shall be crowned, and throned in glory. Well then may the apostle say, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"! They must be blessed. How can it be otherwise? "Die!" No doubt they must die; but death has lost its sting; and it does not matter when, or how, or where they die. Think of it, therefore, not as death, but as glory—going to heaven, and to your Father. It is life through Christ, and life in Christ; life most blissful, and life evermore. III. DEATH IS A BLESSING AS INTRODUCING US INTO A STATE OF REST. 1. At death the believer rests from the toils of life. 2. At death the believer rests from the cares of life. Next to sin, these form life's heaviest burden. There will be nothing in the household above to withdraw Martha from sitting with her sister at Jesus' feet—there Jacob mourns no Joseph, and David weeps no Absalom; the pious widow dreads no empty barrel; Lazarus fears no rich man's frown, nor courts his favour. 3. At death the believer rests from the griefs of life. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

The blessed dead:—I. THE DEAD THAT DIE IN THE LORD. II. WHEREIN ARE THEY BLESSED WHO DIE IN THE LORD? 1. Death is birth to the believer, and birth is ever blessed. 2. Born out of a life which is a long pain to a life which is a long bliss. 3. They pass out of relations and fellowships which are ever changing, to those which abide and enlarge their ministries through eternity. 4. Blessed are they, for they are for ever beyond the reach of all that may imperil the prize. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Blessedness in death:—I. THE IMPRESSIVE MODE OF COMMUNICATION. 1. Heaven never speaks on trifling occasions, or upon matters of indifference. Its utterances are always solemn and weighty. They apprise of danger; they caution us against sin; they counsel us in difficulty; they point us to duty; they cheer us in sorrow; they embolden us in the conflict. Yet, of all its revelations, none can be of such transcendent moment as those which respect the eternal state of the dead. 2. Heaven never speaks but in words of truth and soberness. No possibility of error, no thought of deception. Truth reigns in heaven. 3. Heaven never speaks but with authority. Whether God speaks in His own person, or through the medium of an angelic ministry, it is plainly the duty of man to listen with reverential and obedient attention. 4. These several suggestions receive additional force from the command given to the prophet, saying,

"Write"; which further implies the abiding and unchangeable operation of this truth to the end of time. It is as if the voice had said, Write, that it be not forgotten. Write, that generations yet to come, and nations yet unborn, may read, and derive therefrom incentives to faith and holiness—lessons of triumph over mortality and death. II. THE GREAT SUBJECT OF PROCLAMATION. "Blessed are the dead." How widely opposed is the verdict of man! Blessed rather are the living, around whom life throws its treasures of enjoyment and hopes—"yea, a living dog is better than a dead lion." Death, to the eye of natural sense, is ever shrouded with gloom and sorrow. The gospel of life and immortality creates a difference; and, in the eyes of all who believe and obey the truth, arrays even this, the gloomiest dispensation of Divine providence, in colours of light and loveliness. A vital union with Him, the well-spring of life and happiness, secures them the uninterrupted flow of blessing through every changeful vicissitude of mortality. Death itself may not turn the stream, or prohibit its flow. The very sepulchre feels its fertilising influence, and they pluck flowers of hope and immortality from the margin of the grave. III. THE DIVINE CONFIRMATION. "Yea, saith the Spirit." Why this solemn and impressive asseveration? Does the voice from heaven require a voucher, that the Spirit of truth Himself should appear as witness? Is there need of further testimony? Assuredly not. Yet, in a matter of such passing interest, that our faith may be steadfast and settled, God condescends to supply it. The Spirit witnesses with the voice of blood, and every doubt must vanish. This testimony is given in His Holy Word, which everywhere corroborates the doctrine of the text. This testimony is further given in the believer's heart. There, with still small voice, that Holy One doth sweetly and delightfully repeat the echoes of His written word; for "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," attesting and confirming whatsoever hath been written aforetime for our comfort and edification. Divine arguments are added for the fuller confirmation of our faith. The Spirit's voice is not a delusion, but an appeal to the understanding and judgment. "They rest from their labours." As the toilworn labourer retires from the busy and fatiguing occupations of the day, to seek his evening's repose, so the Christian believer relinquishes life for the rest of paradise. More than this. "Their works do follow them." When the rich man dieth, he shall carry nothing away, but leave his wealth to others. The great must relinquish their honours and distinctions; the wise and ingenious, the fruit of their labours. Nothing of all their pride and possessions may be transported beyond the grave; for their glory shall not descend after them. But these reap the reward of their own doings. No heir steps in to supersede the original owner, and enjoy his possession. As a glorious retinue, their works of piety and mercy grace their progress to the skies, and accompany them even to the very throne; yet not to plead their merits, but justify their faith; not to claim acquittal from the accusations of the law, but an interest in the promises of the gospel. They demonstrate a life of faith in the Son of God, and must therefore secure His approbation, as their author, their end. (*John Lyth.*) *The blessedness of them that die in Christ* :—I. WHAT IT IS TO DIE IN THE LORD, AND WHO MAY BE SAID TO DO SO. 1. What is supposed to be necessary to it, as to their state, whilst they live. And here it is plain, they that die in the Lord must first live in Him. That is, as to the principle of their life, they must be quickened and made alive by Him: As to the work of their life, they must walk after Him: As to the scope of their life, they must live to Him. 2. What this includes, as to their temper, when they come to die. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"; that is, that die—(1) In submission to His will; He having the fullest right to dispose of them as He pleases. (2) In a dependence upon Him, for life and immortality after death, as what He hath purchased and promised, and will assuredly bring His people to. (3) Dying in the Lord includes a sincere desire to be with Him, as far better than to be here. II. THAT HENCEFORTH BELIEVERS ARE BLESSED INDEED. III. CONSIDER THEIR BLESSEDNESS. IV. FOR WHAT REASON IT IS SO SOLEMNLY PROCLAIMED BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, AND ORDERED TO BE RECORDED, THAT THE DEAD ARE BLESSED THAT DIE IN THE LORD. 1. To let it be known in this world how it fares with the friends of Jesus in another. 2. To assure believers that death is no bar to their happiness, but the sure, though awful way to it. 3. To leave it on record to the end of time, and assure those that live in every age, that here is not their rest. (*D. Wilcox.*) *The blessedness of dying in the Lord* :—I. THE INTRODUCTION. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write." 1. We here see the truth of the subsequent announce-

ment. The doctrine to be taught is not of human origin. It is neither a dictate of man's imagination, nor an effusion of rash enthusiasm, nor a deduction of erring reason; but it comes direct from the region of unclouded light, the fountain of unerring truth. 2. We see also the importance of the doctrine announced. (1) This is evinced in its origin. If heaven speaks, it is not to proclaim a useless or insignificant truth, nor to unveil some trifling or uninteresting mystery. This would reflect on the Divine wisdom. (2) This is further seen in the command given: "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me"—What?—Remember?—or Preach?—No, but "Write."—The truths thou art about to hear are of infinite moment, and deeply interest every child of man. II. BUT WHAT IS IT that is promulgated by this high authority, and is revealed with attendant circumstances which so clearly attest its great importance? "Blessed are the dead," &c. 1. The subjects of this blessedness are the dead; yet not the dead indiscriminately, but "the dead that die in the Lord." Such is the ambiguity of the phrase "in the Lord," as to render its precise meaning in this passage somewhat uncertain. At times its obvious import is, "in the cause, or on account, of the Lord." And looking at the entire connexion in which the passage stands, such an interpretation appears by no means inappropriate. Every Christian, truly so called, is "in the Lord." Hence the striking language of the Redeemer Himself: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: abide in Me and I in you." This all-important union is affected, on the part of the Christian, by faith, and is consummated, on the part of Christ, by the bestowal of His indwelling Spirit. Two important parts of their blessedness are here brought before us:—They rest from their labours—and their works follow them. Does the wearied traveller rejoice on seeing his loved but long absent home, where he hopes to end his wanderings. Does the mariner, long tossed by the fierce storm, and endangered by the rolling waves, and drifted sands, and sunken or frowning rocks, rejoice on his entrance into the harbour, in which fear is exchanged for security, and turmoil for peace? Yes, they rest from their labours, and account themselves blessed. III. Who does not feel that such an announcement would be incredible were it not so ATTESTED AS TO PLACE IT BEYOND THE REACH OF REASONABLE DOUBT? And, thanks to the condescension and abounding grace of God, such an attestation we have. "Yea, saith the Spirit." The doctrine of immortality, with its glorious and awful results, is one of those primeval truths that constitute the religious belief of the first generations of men. It underlay both the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. But it was reserved for Him who came as the "light of the world" to present this doctrine in the fulness of its glory. But while in the economy of redemption it is the glory of the Son to ransom and save, it is the prerogative and glory of the Spirit to reveal and attest truth, and by its application to the understanding and heart, to enlighten, and sanctify, and make fit for heaven. And by that Spirit the great doctrine announced in our text is attested. "Yea, saith the Spirit." "True—certainly, infallibly true—I, the Spirit of Truth, whose prerogative it is to search all things, even the deep things of God, and to reveal them to man—I corroborate the testimony that the dead which die in the Lord are, and shall be, thus blessed. Though one of the things which no mortal eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the most fruitful imagination conceived, yet do I thus solemnly avow, that in all the brightness of the glories it unfolds, and in all the richness of the blessings it promises, it is true. On it, as an immovable rock, you may rest. And in its assured prospects you may trample on the world and sin—mortify self—multiply works of faith and labours of love—and defy the powers of persecution, how fierce soever the forms it may assume, or agonising the tortures and deaths it may inflict. Labours, sacrifices, and tortures are momentary only, but recompenses are eternal." (Thomas Allin.) *Death in the Lord*:—Let us look at the individual phrases of this remarkable text. In the first place, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." That expression "from henceforth" is one of the most difficult that ever the exegists or expositors of the Bible have confronted. It may refer to a new point of departure with regard to the blessed dead. It may refer to a new point of departure with respect to the revelation of that blessedness. It may refer to a new departure with regard to the testimony of the Spirit. We may connect it with the second part of the verse, and not the first. I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, from henceforth they rest from their labours." But you perceive as there is some doubt as to the application of the phrase, we are embarrassed by the riches in this case, for the applications of the phrase are so varied. It may be that the phrase looks backward to the beginning of the verse, and forward to the conclusion, so that it indicates somehow in the redemption of God, and revelation of Christ, and testimony of the

Spirit, a new point of departure from Him henceforth. Certainly there is one very remarkable fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ appears to mark a new departure even with respect to the terms used about the saints of God. Stephen was the first martyr, and, in fact, his death is the first death which is spread in record on the pages of Holy Scripture. It was the first death of a believer in Jesus, subsequent to Christ's resurrection, and I beg you to notice that his death is manifestly typical, and the description of it is of typical significance. For we read that "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." "And when he had said this he fell asleep." There are three marked features here evidently typical. In the first place the vision of heaven and of Christ. In the second place, perfect peace of mind even in the agonies of a violent death; and, in the third place, a new term applied to death. "He fell asleep." Have you ever noticed the fact that from the time of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the last verse of the last chapter of the Apocalypse you will never once find death, the death of a believer, referred to as death without some qualifying phrase attached to it? There is one case of exception. In the ninth chapter of Acts we read of the death of Dorcas or Tabitha, and the word "died" is used with reference to her though she was a believer; but the reason of it is obvious. Peter was about to call her back from death to life, therefore it was important that the actual fact of her death should be unmistakably stated as if it had been said that she fell asleep; it might have been said that he simply roused her from her trance, but when it is said that she died there was no doubt of her resuscitation from the dead. But in every other case that I have been able to trace in the New Testament the death of the believer is never once referred to as death, except with some such qualifying phrase as we find in this text. Died in the Lord, which at once separates such death from the death of unbelievers. Now, that phrase "In the Lord" must have three great interpretations. In this sphere the limitation to which I have referred, the penitent believer goes from the world, and from sin and Satan, and condemnation redemptively into this Divine sphere of safety, and holiness and happiness. And then, in the second place, actively and actually, for your life is taken into the life of Christ; your work taken into the work of Christ; your destiny taken into the destiny of Christ; your life plan taken into the life plan of God (Rom. xiv. 7, 8). Oh, the magnificence of that thought! I would to God I could rise to it, and help you to rise to it. While you live you are in this sphere: in Christ Jesus. Each may enter into that sphere. When you die, when you fall asleep as to your body, you are at home with the Lord. Now the apostle says that the man who lives unto the Lord dies unto the Lord. The Lord has not surrendered His control of him when death comes upon him. Neither has he lost his identity and unity with Jesus when he falls asleep. So we have both active and actual redemption in the Lord. But look at the concluding part of this great text. "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." I need not say much about the first part of this clause, "They rest from their labours." There is absolute rest for every believer who is at home with the Lord from everything that mars our service in this world. But I must fasten your thought for a moment on the lines of this great expression "and their works do follow them." This is another difficult phrase. There are three principal applications. One is that the works done in Christ Jesus are a saint's memorial and monument in this world. The second suggestion is that the works which he has done here follow him into eternity as his witness before the throne of God unto his fidelity, and are the means of increasing his reward. And there is a third which I venture to suggest, and which will, I believe, commend itself to us. The Greek word translated follow, really means and enter, it is the following of the disciple that treads in the heels of his Master just before him; it is following and companionship and fellowship. And there is another thing which suggests and confirms this interpretation—namely, the difference in the terms of the original, which appears in the English translation. They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. What is the difference between labour and work? Labour in the original is a Latin word, and in the English word it suggests—as it does in the original Greek word—the idea of hindrance. All difficulty, all weariness, the burden-bearing which suggests the idea that the man is doing, toiling, and taxing his strength; that which fatigues him, so that he comes from his work worried and worn out; it suggests the idea that his strength is unequal to the task, and that he feels himself circumscribed with limitations. But the Master's work simply means activity, doing, performing. Now see how blessed the thought that the Holy Spirit suggests to us,

The saint of God, falling asleep as to his body, enters into the presence of his Lord, as to his spirit. For evermore the labour, toil, vexations, of this world is left behind him, but he carries with him his service into immortality—he goes to carry on his work for God. Thus his immortality has come at last. He goes where there are no limitations, where there are no vexations or hindrances to circumscribe his activity—where they rest, not because they are never tired or fatigued—where they wait on the Lord, but renew their strength, mount on wings, walk and never faint—but enjoy the tireless and the unending activity of redeemed souls, partakers of the tireless energy of the untiring God. (*A. T. Pierson, D. D.*)

The two voices:—"The voice said, Write,"—that is, the voice of God as it sounded from above; and the Spirit said, "Yea,"—that is, the spirit of inspiration and obedience, as it answered from within, ever keen to discern the heavenly revelations, and prompt to perform the heavenly will. That is the picture presented us here—a something that discloses and a something that assents—the announcement of an objective truth and the presence and the sympathy of a subjective response. It is God's truth and the Spirit's affirmative, God's communication and the Spirit's consent. I. Take the principle, then, as it affects THE PRODUCTION OF DIVINE SCRIPTURE. For not only in regard to the announcement made here, but the doctrine and the narratives of Scripture throughout, it holds true that the voice said, "Write," and the Spirit of God in the penman said, "Yea." He said, "Yea," as the Spirit of inspiration. And apart from the testimony of the Bible to itself, there is a proof of its origin in its own inner character. Take, among other evidences, this one: the persistency with which the facts and the truths transcribed run counter to the natural prepossessions and prejudice of those who transcribe them. II. Note the same fact with regard to THE ACCEPTANCE OF DIVINE TRUTH. In regard, then, to the belief of the Scripture as well as its delivery, the Spirit returns His deep inward "Yea"; He returns it as the Spirit of conviction. And this, mark, in two cases. The response arises in the case of those whom the Spirit has entered to sanctify, and it arises in the case of those with whom He is present to persuade. Deep in their heart of hearts there is a something that throbs back to them saying, "These things are real; I must believe them accordingly." III. Take the principle as it refers to THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DIVINE COMMANDS. For the voice that bids us write and believe bids us also do and endure, and when it does so the Spirit again answers, "Yea." He answers "Yea," as the Spirit of submission and obedience. IV. Take the thought of the text in regard to THE ENJOYMENT OF DIVINE PRIVILEGES. For the same voice from heaven has a message as to these, and while the message of assurance and of comfort is revealed from above, the Spirit responds from within with His "Yea": He does so as the Spirit of adoption. And surely, of all the Divine intimations, the sweetest and the fullest is this: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name: thou art Mine." There will be often a "Nay" to assurances such as these. There is the "Nay" of Satanic impeachment. Scripture clearly prepares us to meet and to deal with that. V. Observe the principle of the text as it bears on THE WELCOME OF DIVINE HOPES. And of these hopes take one—the hope of the Lord's Second Advent. We close by considering His response as the Spirit of longing and of love. True, again, there are voices that are raised in dissent. "Nay," say the unholy, to whom the thought of Christ's Advent is a terror; "Nay," say the profane, to whom the prophecy is a scoff, asking, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But from a multitude whom no man can number, even the Church upon earth which a Saviour has chosen, to be saved through atoning blood, preserved by sanctifying grace, and made meet for eternal glory, there rises a mighty and manifold "Yea." And well may the Spirit in the Bride's heart say "Yea," and speak of the prospect disclosed as that "blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (*W. A. Gray.*)

Rest in heaven:—Dr. Bushnell, when well, abounded in life and action. He once preached a sermon on "The Employments of Heaven." A weary, hard-working woman was heard to say, when the service closed, "Well, if heaven is such a place for work I don't care to go there; I hoped I should rest." Dr. B. said, as his strength began to fail, the thought of rest grew more precious to him also. It only illustrates how apt we are to see everything from ourselves. (*Presbyterian.*)

No Monday in heaven:—There will be no Monday in heaven, and we shall not have to begin the old round of toil afresh as soon as the Sabbath's peace is past. There will be an everlasting Sabbath.

Vers. 14-20. **Thrust in thy sickle, and reap.**—*The harvest and the vintage*:—It is held by many that both these refer to the same fact of God's judgment against sin and sinners. And no doubt, at times, the "harvest" does mean such judgment (Joel iii. 13; Jer. li. 33). In Matt. xiii. both harvests—that of good and evil alike—are told of. "Let both grow together until," &c. Still more commonly the figure stands for the people of God and their ingathering into His blessed presence. And we think that here, whilst there can be no doubt as to what the vintage means, the "harvest" does not mean the same, but that gathering of "the wheat into His garner" which shall one day most surely be accomplished. For see the preface (ver. 13) to this vision. It speaks of the blessed dead and their rest. And but for the plain pointing out that the vintage did not refer to them, that also would have been so understood. And the Lord Jesus Christ—for He is meant—is Himself the Reaper (ver. 14), Himself thrusts in the sickle (ver. 16), whilst the vintage of judgment is assigned to an angel (ver. 17), indicating that it is a different work from the other. And the figure itself, the harvest, the precious corn fully ripe, belongs generally and appropriately to that which is also precious and an object of delight, as is the company of His people to the Lord whose they are. It is not the time of the harvest, but the corn of the harvest, which is spoken of here, and this is ever the type of good, and not evil. Thus understood, let us note—

I. THE HARVEST. "The harvest of the earth." This tells of—

1. The multitude of God's people. Who can count the ears of corn even in one harvest-field? how much less in the harvest of the whole earth?
2. The preciousness of them. What could we do without the literal harvest of the earth? Our all, humanly speaking, depends upon it.
3. The joy of God in them. "They shall joy before Thee with the joy of harvest."
4. The care that has been needed and given.
5. The "long patience" that has been exercised. Who but God could be so patient? We often cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" But He waits—and we must learn the like lesson—for the harvest of the earth, for that which is being ripened in our own soul.
6. The evidence of ripeness. We know of the natural harvest that it is ripe by the grain assuming its golden hue. And when it is thus with the people of God, when the golden light of the Sun of Righteousness shines on them and they are transformed thereby, then the evidence of ripeness is seen, and the season for the sickle has come.
7. God will certainly gather in His people. "Harvest shall not fail"; nor shall this harvest either. "Look up, lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

II. THE VINTAGE. Under the altar on which was "the fire," over which the angel told of in ver. 18 "had power," were the souls of them that had been slain for the testimony of Jesus (chap. vi. 9). They had asked, "How long, O Lord, . . . dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And now the answer is given. The vintage of vengeance has begun. For the "grapes" of the "vine of the earth" are fully ripe. It is the judgment of the whole earth, when "all nations" shall be gathered (Matt. xxv.) before the Son of Man. The square of four—four ever the symbol of the earth—amplified by hundreds, the "one thousand and six hundred furlongs" of ver. 20, likewise point to the universality of this awful judgment. Minor fulfilments—presages, predictions, and patterns of the final judgment—of these there have been many and will be many; but in this vintage of vengeance upon the world's sin all are summed up and fulfilled. But will there be any such event at all? 1. Men have ever felt that there ought to be such judgment.

2. And now it is declared that such judgment shall be. Conscience assents to it.
3. Human law and justice strive after right judgment.
4. And the judgments that come now on ungodly nations, communities, and individuals are all in proof. (*S. Conway, B.A.*)

A coronation sermon:—

I. THE ILLUSTRIOUS PERSONAGE INTENDED. This we conceive to be no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the exalted Messiah, who, for the suffering of death, was made a little lower than the angels, and is now crowned with glory and honour.

1. His characteristic designation—"The Son of Man." This was the form or similitude He wore. The manhood of Christ is exalted to the throne of Deity.
2. His high exaltation. He is said to be throned on the clouds of heaven, and dignified with the highest honours.
3. The insignia appropriate to His office. He is advanced to the dignity and authority of a king, and therefore is invested with a crown of gold, and a sickle—an emblem of power, answering to a sceptre or sword, but put in this form, as having a relation to the service which was immediately to be performed in reaping the harvest of the earth. These are the regalia of His kingly office.

II. THE MAGNIFICENT APPEARANCE HE ASSUMED.

1. He is seated on a white cloud. On a cloud, to betoken His elevation and empire. On a

white cloud, to signify the immaculate purity of His nature, as the Holy One of God; the unimpeachable rectitude of His administrations, transparent as the fleecy vapour of which these visible heavens are composed; and the blessed consequences of His government, when purity shall be universally established, and "white-robed Innocence," returning to our forsaken world, shall take place of fraud and rapine, violence and blood. Furthermore, on this luminous cloud He is said to have been seated, as on a throne, expressing at once the high dignity and perfect repose which He enjoys. 2. On His head was a golden crown. The crown is an emblem of empire and dominion, and a crown of pure gold fitly represents the validity of His title, and the honour and glory by which He is encircled. 3. In His hand there is a sharp sickle. This I apprehend to be an emblem of His judicial authority and retributive vengeance. To Him the Father hath given authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man, and hath put all things into His hands. What havoc and slaughter shall be made by the sharp sickle, with which He is invested, when His irreclaimable enemies shall be made the helpless victims of His inexorable indignation! When the great day of His wrath is come, who shall be able to stand? III. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS INCULCATED BY THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE SUBJECT. 1. We infer the high and honourable conceptions we should form and entertain of the Lord Christ. 2. We infer that, "before honour is humility." 3. Let us learn how important it is to ascertain whether we are among the subjects of this exalted Prince. 4. Let us learn to rejoice in the perfection of His administration. 5. Let us learn how terrible will be the final doom of all the enemies of this mighty Prince. 6. If such be the advantages and pleasures connected with the sight and contemplation of a glorified Saviour in this world, what will the beatific vision include? To see Him as He is, without the interposition of any obscuring veil, any dense medium! (G. Clayton.) *The harvest of the earth*:—The expression is a singular and, indeed, a striking one. I. GOD PREPARED THE EARTH FOR HIS SEEDING. Scientific men may wrangle over the ages and order of creation. It is enough for us to know that, at a given time, God had prepared the earth to be the scene of a moral trial for a new race of beings. The farmer cleans, and ploughs, and manures, and harrows, and ridges, his fields, in precise adaptation to the crop that he intends to grow upon it; and earth is the prepared field of God, made ready for His sowing. II. GOD SEEDS HIS PREPARED EARTH WITH MEN. Scattering the seed all over the earth, that man's probation may be carried on under every varying condition of soil, and landscape, and climate, and relationship. God keeps on seeding the earth with men; every seed with a great possibility in it; every seed set where its possibility may freely unfold, and where the God-provided influences all tend to the nourishment of all its best possibilities. Men, men everywhere are the seed of God. They are quick with Divine life, and sown in the earth to grow into a harvest for God. III. THE HARVEST GOD SEEKS FROM HIS SEEDING IS CHARACTER. God sows His earth with moral beings, in the hope of reaping moral character. But what is moral character? It is the proper fruitage of the earth-experience of moral beings. But can we understand it a little more fully than that? A moral being is one that can recognise a distinction between good and evil, and, when the distinction is seen, can choose for itself which it will have, the good or the evil. But a moral being must be put into such circumstances as will offer it the choice between good and evil. And substantially the test amounts to this: good is doing what is known to be the will of the Creator: evil is doing the will of the moral being himself, when that is known to be not the will of the Creator. The story of a life is the story of that conflict. It is the growth, through the long months, of God's seed into the "full corn in the ear" of established moral character. It is the unfolding of what God would gather in from His seeding of men, the righteousness of the accepted will of God. One thing only does man take through the great gates—the character that he has gained. It is the full ear that heads the stalk, and ripens for the reaper. IV. GOD HAS ANXIOUS TIMES WHILE HIS SEED OF MEN IS GROWING INTO HIS HARVEST OF CHARACTER. Every blade that breaks the earth in the farmer's field has to fight for its life with varied foes: insects, worms, mildew, rust, living creatures, varying temperatures, crowding weeds; the growth of every blade to stalk and ear is a hard-won victory. The stalk can do its best, and be its best, only at the cost of unceasing struggle and watchfulness. And the field of earth is but a type of the world of men. Every character is the product of a stern experience, the issue of a hundred fights; a triumph from an unceasing struggle. The problem of each man's dealings with his surroundings—helpful be they, or injurious—God is intensely

interested in. He is anxious as the farmer is anxious over his growing blades. The one thing of profoundest interest to God is the making of characters in His great earth-fields. Be it so; then a fact of infinite sadness has to be faced. The issue is disappointing, for God's harvest-hope of reaping character from His sowing of men is only partially fulfilled. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *The twin mysteries: life and death*:—I. THE TRUE THEORY OF A GOOD MAN'S LIFE RIPENING FOR THE HARVEST. Did you ask, while you saw the farmer plodding his weary way, what means that sowing? Did you ask, as you saw the wind and the snow fulfilling the word of a higher power, what means the white flake and the rough blast? You have now the plainest answer in the growing of the corn. And if you again inquire, What is it growing for? the harvest will explain that. When the ear has been well filled, and the heat hath ripened and moulded the wheat, and the golden treasures are gathered home amid the reapers' song of joy, and the barns are filled with plenty, the result will sufficiently explain the theory of agricultural toil and of natural influences. And in like manner the growth of the soul explains the moral discipline of life; and the harvest of souls in heaven explains their growth on earth. The days we spend at present are all days of discipline. Now, is this the theory of your life? Are you conscious of such growth and ripening? "No," says some poor, timid, cast-down Christian, "there is no growth, no ripening in me; my heart is as hard and cold as ever it can be." But, are you not conscious of resisting temptation? You cannot deny that you are fighting against sin. If you cannot boast of any good, and have a great deal of evil to lament, still you can conscientiously admit that if you did not make a decided stand you would have a great deal more of evil than you have at present. And is there not hope in that fact—that casting off of evil, and striving and praying and wishing to get rid of spiritual death?—is not that a sign of spiritual life, of spiritual growth, at least in its earliest stage? Thank God, there is hope. It is God working in you; He will not fail to watch over you for your good. II. THE TRUE THEORY OF DEATH as illustrated by the text. First of all, it is never premature. If the wicked are not cut down until they are ripe for judgment, we cannot believe that God's people are cut down till they are ripe for glory. Fitness for heaven, be it remembered, consists not in the particular state of mind in which a man may happen to be when the death-stroke overtakes him. It does not depend upon his being in a state of religious consciousness. No; it depends upon the habits in previous life, upon the principle of his previous history. Nor shall we be dismissed till we have had full opportunity of doing all that the Master intends us to do. There are different degrees of service, even as there are varied kinds of service. The terms of service are sometimes long and sometimes short. Nor forget that there may be much living to good purpose when the length of life has been very limited. We often measure life by length. Does not God measure it by depth and breadth? We look at quantity, does not He look at quality? The harvest is never premature, and is always carefully gathered in, and nothing lost. There is something very instructive in the signs of careful preparation for the harvest, which are indicated in the text. Before it is commenced, a voice announces the arrival of the time, and the purpose is calmly and deliberately executed. In the death harvest there is no haste and nothing lost. "Of all that the Father hath given Me," said Christ, "have I lost nothing." He is as careful of what there is of value in the soul as of the soul itself. How very apt are we to fancy, when such an one is suddenly cut off, that the great stores of his mind are wasted, that his acquirements by study and discipline are now lost to him. No, no, we may rely upon it, that there is not anything worth carrying into the eternal world that that sanctified soul will leave behind it; not one noble affection but is nobler than it ever was; not one great principle but it is stronger in the soul than ever, not one spiritual habit but it has grown in force, not one true excellence but it excels in beauty. And the harvest gathered in without loss is preserved afterwards without loss: "Gather the wheat into My garner." Corn is laid up to be preserved; but that is not all, it is also laid up that it may be used. At the death harvest, the soul is placed for ever beyond the reach of harm. The accidents to which it was exposed while growing, the moral frost, and blight, and mildew, and the blast of the lightning, they are all among the former things, and have passed away. But the soul is preserved where it will be of greater use than it ever was. The best use of the corn comes when it is cut. All before was subordinate usefulness, beautifying the landscape and furnishing subjects for poets and painters; but when it is cut, it feeds and sustains the nations. So the best use of the soul and its acquirements will be in heaven, not here. (*J. Stoughton.*)

CHAPTER XV.

VERS. 1-4. Seven angels having the seven last plagues.—*Divine severity and human heroism*.—I. **DIVINE SEVERITY.** Undoubtedly in the government of this world there is the stormy as well as the mild, the gloomy as well as the pleasant. The government under which we live on this earth often assumes aspects of terrible severity. II. **HUMAN HEROISM.** The heroes here suggested are: 1. Those who have conquered the wrong. Sin is a hideous, ravenous, iniquitous "beast," served and worshipped by unredeemed men the world over. The foe against which the true hero fights is sin, and sin only. 2. Those who ascribe their victory to God. Observe—(1) Their posture is one of safety. The sea does not surge about them; it is beneath them. It is a position of splendour. The crystal sea on which they stand is made brilliant by fire. There is no posture of soul so sublime and safe as the true posture of worship. The Shekinah beams around them as their glory and defence. Observe—(2) Their anthem. (a) Triumphant praise. (b) Philanthropic devotion. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) The song of Moses . . . and the song of the Lamb.—*The song of Moses and the Lamb*.—I. **THE TRIUMPHANT CHOIR.** He calls these triumphant choristers "conquerors out of the beast," which implies that victory over him is an escape from a dominion in which the conquerors before their victory were held. They have fought their way, as it were, out of the land of bondage, and have won their liberty. By Christ we conquer. Through faith, which lays hold on His power and victory, we too may conquer. II. **THE POSITION OF THIS VICTORIOUS CHORUS.** As Moses and the ransomed hosts stood on the shore of the Red Sea, so these conquerors are represented by anticipation as standing on the safe beach, and looking out upon this sea of glass mingled with fire, which, calm, crystal, clear, stable, and yet shot through and through with the red lines of retributive judgment, sleeps above the buried oppressors. Observe that besides its picturesque appropriateness and its historical allusion, this sea of glass has a distinct symbolical meaning. "Thy judgments are a mighty deep." "Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" That great ocean of the judgment of God is crystalline—clear though it be deep. If we cannot look to its lowest depths, that is not because there is any mud or foulness there, but partly because the light from above fails before it reaches the abysses, and partly because our eyes are uneducated to search its depths. If it be clear as far as the eye can see, let us trust that beyond the reach of the eye the clearness is the same. And it is a crystal ocean as being calm. They who stand there have gotten the victory, and bear the image of the Master. By reason of their conquest, and by reason of their sympathy with Him, they see that what to us, tossing upon its surface, appears such a troubled and tempestuous ocean, is calm and still; and their vision, not ours, is the true one. It is a "sea of glass mingled with fire." Divine acts of retribution, as it were, flash through it, if I may so say, like those streaks of red that you see in Venice glass, or like some ocean smitten upon the one side of every wave by a fiery sunlight, while the other side of each is dark. So through that great depth of God's dealings there flashes the light of retribution. III. **THE OCCASION OF THE SONG, AND THE SONG ITSELF.** "They sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb." The "song of Moses" was a song of triumph over destructive judgment; the "song of the Lamb," says my text, is set in the same key. The one broad, general lesson to be drawn from this is the essential unity, in spite of all superficial diversities, of the revelation of God in the Old Covenant by law and miracle and retributive acts, and the revelation of God in the New Covenant by the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ. And there is another principle here, and that is the perfect harmony of the retributive acts of God's destructive dealings in this world, and the highest conception of His love and mercy which the gospel brings us. "When the wicked perish," says one of the old proverbs, "there is shouting." And so there ought to be. When some hoary oppression that has been deceiving mankind for centuries with its instruments and accomplices is swept off the face of the earth, the more men have entered into the meaning of Jesus Christ's mission and work, and the more they feel the pitying indignation which they ought to feel at seeing men led away by evil, and made miserable by oppression, the more they will rejoice. And the last thought that I would suggest to you is, that according to the teaching of my text, we may take that old, old story of the ransomed slaves and the baffled oppressor, and the Divine intervention, and the overwhelming ocean,

as a prophecy full of radiant hope for the world. That is how it is used here. Pharaoh is the beast, the Red Sea is this "sea of glass mingled with fire," the ransomed Israelites are those that have conquered their way out of the dominion of the beast. And the "song of Moses and of the Lamb" is a song parallel to the cadences of the ancient triumphant chorus, and celebrating the annihilation of that power which drew the world away from God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The hymn of the victors*:—I. WHO WERE THEY THAT SANG? It is a question of moment for men still. Man is man the world through, and no temptation has touched us with its polluting finger which did not touch them. The image of the beast and the varied semblances of sins had presented themselves to their minds. The stamp of indulged desire, of unrestrained passion, of selfishness and mean thoughts, of untruth and cowardice, of unmanliness and impurity, was heated ready for their brows and backs as it is for ours. The number of the beast is sometimes a swelling magnitude, always a perfected and enticing product in the computation of earth. Public opinion, now elevated to a moral law as high in authority and terrible in sanction as that of Horeb, had to be counted with and opposed by them as by us. The morals of their age had to be avoided as a test or guide, and they, as we, had to rise higher than material interests, and explode, with the stout breath of earnestness and sincerity, the bubbles which, though hollow and worthless, were radiant under the worldly sun. They had come victorious from the beast and from his image, and from his mark and from the number of his name. The essence of their triumph lay in this—that they had educated themselves to look upon the permanent relation of things. The tendency that always temp's us is to see only the narrow relations that are close about us. They think only upon the daily occupation of hand and head, and their converse with their friends embraces no greater theme. But the true mind, beyond the glare of the present, sees the brightness of another life, and the reality of another world. He is continually applying the standard of eternal life to the fragmentary portions of existence on earth. II. SEE, TOO, THE SUBJECT AND THE VALUE OF THEIR SONG. Like nearly every hymn in this Book, it tells of the works of God. It is not silent upon the judgments that are seen, nor upon the sorrows and failures of men; but it looks to the One Hand that is powerful, and it asserts that all the works which are done by God are just works and true. There is a sense in which we can clearly see this ourselves, for we can distinguish between the operation and the result. There is a solvent with God for the issues of human deeds. Man works while God overrules. Centuries of investigation have been heaped upon centuries; books beyond counting have been written; but notwithstanding, we are still like children gazing curiously at a great machine, and our conclusions and theories are like heaps of shifting sand upon a forsaken shore. III. BEHOLD THE PROSPECT THEY HOLD OUT. 1. It is a prospect of advancing holiness to themselves. Though enwrapt within eternal blessedness there are long distances, we will not say of purity, but of attainments, which they may yet tread. Is immortality, then, a range and region of perpetual progress? Are we not to lie down in it and sleep, and let the great worlds of a renewed universe wheel round unthought of and unobserved? The whole of the Book says, No. It speaks of endless activity, of mightier attempts and more glorious achievements than we dared to conceive on the earth, of ceaseless efforts towards a glad success. 2. As to the progress of earth. "All nations," they say, "shall come and worship before Thee." Out of the present actual world there is constantly springing, hour by hour, another world, which in its turn begets a fresh condition of things; for nothing sleeps, and events are never still. The prophecy in this light is inspired with force and fruit. There is a progress of the nations, and therefore of those who compose the nations, distinctly foretold. For worship is the condition of progress, development, and advancement. The nation, as the man, which has ceased to worship, has ceased to grow. Ideals then are lost or dissolved. The higher is unattained because there is no vision of the Highest. But where worship is real, unflagging, and unabused, where nations can see the Eternal One, that sits upon His throne, and hear the hymns that swell from lips of brothers who have fought the good fight of faith, and by the might of Christ have won, there is the guarantee of national principles that will not be cheaply sold, of national stability that challenges and defies assault, and of national progress that expands and strengthens because it has learnt that there is a rhythm and sweetness in the life which has shaped itself to the changeless law, and an articulate gladness and glory which issues from the cross of self-denial and sacrifice. (*W. M. Johnston, M.A.*) *The song of God's heroes*:—I. THE SERVICE OF SONG IS THE HIGHEST

EMPLOYMENT OF REDEEMED MAN. The redeemed whom John saw in vision had left behind them all the imperfections of life, and reached its consummation. The toil and the care were ended. The long battle had closed. Here is the first point to be marked, viz., that perfection of life was the spirit of their song. All the discipline of the earthly had been for this end, that every conflict of the heart should become the element of praise; that every sorrow should change into thanksgiving; that their souls, by all the education of life, should be tuned as harps for God. We may observe still further, that it is the noblest office of music to become the language of those emotions that border on the infinite and eternal. There is nothing in this world that can so completely lift a man's soul above the cares and doubts of time, right up to the throne of God, as the inspiring notes of a psalm of praise. Here, then, is the lesson which the words have for us to-day: just as Christian life approaches the heavenly spirit, that life becomes one song of praise. For the essential principle of Christian life is self-surrendering love to God, and that can bring thanksgiving out of sorrow. You may have known men, old and grey in the Christian conflict, over whom great sorrows have rolled, but they are yet young in soul, for life has renewed its youth in thanksgiving. II. THAT SONG UNITES THE SPIRITUAL HEROES OF ALL THE AGES. Men from the dispensation of Moses—men from that of Christ; this seems implied in the words, "They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb." 1. The true heroes of all ages are engaged in one conflict. We are told in the 13th chapter that "the beast had power given unto him to make war with the saints." There were men in the past whose battle was hard fought in the heart—they overcame. There are such men now. Life is full of heroisms. He who in the little things of daily life fights on unnoticed and unknown, is in spirit a great warrior. The man who does not know hard struggles does not know how the soul rises into song. 2. One means of victory—faith. . . . Observe what a glorious idea this gives of heaven. Men from all ages united by one conflict; their song tuned to one spirit of praise. No age is barren—as in music, many voices, but one harmony. . . . III. ITS THEME IS GOD'S CONNECTED DISPENSATIONS. On earth we praise God for redemption; in heaven they praise God for the whole economy of revelation. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The song of Moses and the Lamb*:—Without pretending to settle what events may be thus prophetically alluded to, we may safely consider our text as belonging to a glorious season, when Christ shall have mightily interfered on behalf of His people, and swept away those who have resisted His authority. The song is a song of exultation, sung by the righteous, and called forth by judgments which have overwhelmed the wicked. The song is one not only of thanksgiving to the Lord, but of exultation over the wicked, and of rejoicing in their destruction. We hardly know a more perplexing truth, nor one which more shows how vast a change will have passed over our feelings when we shall have put on immortality, than that of our acquiescing in the punishment of the wicked; yea, of our approving that punishment, and magnifying God for the vindication of His attributes. It is not merely that those whom wrath overtakes and consigns to perdition will be our fellow-men, beings of the same race, and therefore linked with us by most intimate associations. This were much; for this would seem enough to seal our lips, or cause lament to mingle with our song. But it must come to pass that, in variety of instances, there will be the division of families, so that whilst one member is with the Israelites, another will be with the Egyptians. And this division must be thoroughly known. We must believe that, with all the consciousness that some whom they tenderly loved have earned for themselves a heritage of shame and despair, the ransomed of the Lord will feel how the Divine attributes have been magnified in the punishment awarded to the impenitent, and join in praising their Maker for the manifestation of His justice. And this—however we may shrink from what appears so unnatural—this describes to us what is loftiest in Christian attainment, and what, therefore, may justly be looked for in our future state of being. I know that it would be Christian perfection to have God all in all; to make Him so completely the centre of the affections, or to be so lost in Deity as to have no will but His will, and no end but His glory. We proceed to observe that the song of the triumphant Church is described, not only as the song of Moses, but as that also of the Lamb. "They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb." Now we may be said to feel more at home with the song of the Lamb than with that of Moses; for this is a song of which, even now, we can strike some notes, whereas we look on that of Moses with a kind of awe and dread, as though it were not suited to such minstrelsy as ours. It is the song of grateful

confession that we owe everything to the Redeemer, and that His blood and righteousness have been the alone procuring causes of deliverance from ruin and a title to immortality. And there is vast beauty in the retention of the name of the Lamb in the melodies of heaven. Were not the wounds of the Redeemer the arms with which He mastered the enemies of God? and what are they now but trophies of the unmeasured achievement? To appear therefore as the Lamb, "a lamb as it had been slain," in the midst of all the magnificence of the everlasting city, is to appear as the mighty Conqueror who led captivity captive. And if it be as the Lamb that Christ is most glorious, what but the song of the Lamb shall be most on the lips of those for whom He died? We doubt not there will be many and various hymns chanted in the celestial temple. Archangel to angel, cherubim to seraphim, and man to man, will roll sublime choruses, such as our speech cannot now embody, nor our thought embrace. But one hymn there will be which shall be peculiar to men. One anthem shall be heard in which none but those who were once ready to perish will be able to join, but which their voices will never be weary of uttering: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." Such is a portion of the lofty anthem. To take this anthem in its largest application, we may say that it celebrates the greatness and the justice of God as displayed in the occurrences of the judgment day. And it is well worth your attention, that these two characteristics shall be finally declared to have distinguished the whole business of the judgment. It will be a great and marvellous work, when the tares shall have been separated from the wheat, all unrighteousness detected and exposed, the wicked banished, and the faithful exalted. The spectacle has never yet been presented to the inhabitants of this earth, so fraught with the manifestations of Omnipotence as shall be that of the general judgment. What display of power can equal that which will be given by the resurrection of the dead? And if the gathering together of the buried generations, reconstructed and reanimated, be the mightiest imaginable display of God's power over matter, what shall more declare His power over mind than that laying bare of all the secrets of men's hearts, on which the last sentences shall be founded, and by which they will be justified? Then you must add the portents and signs which are to herald the Judge: the storm and the calm alike proclaim that Omnipotence is there. But this is not the whole of the chorus. The Church affirms God's ways to be just and true, as well as His works to be great and marvellous. And this is a most important assertion, when considered as called forth by the transactions of the judgment. There is something overwhelming in the thought that the untold millions of the human population will undergo an individual scrutiny; that they will come, man by man, to the bar of their God, and each be tried by his own privileges and powers. We can hardly put from us the feeling that, in so enormous an assize, there will be cases comparatively overlooked, for which due allowance is not made, or in which the sentence is not founded on a full estimate of the circumstances. But whatever our doubts and suspicions beforehand, "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints," is the confession, you observe, which will follow the judgment. It is a confession, we are bold to say, in which the lost will join with the redeemed. The feeling in every condemned man shall be that, had there been none but himself to be tried, his case could not have received a more patient attention, or a more equitable decision. And we rejoice in hearing the chorus which is chanted on the glassy and fiery sea. It tells us that God will be justified when He speaks, and clear when He judgeth. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

The song of Moses and of the Lamb:—What has one to do with the other? Here are the oldest of recorded events and words joined with the farthest and latest possible events and words. Here is the beginning of earth's human history united with its Divine consummation. Here are the words of earth and heaven coupled together. The song of Moses, and the song of the Lord Christ—the song of Israelitish victory and of Christian victory, in one breath of thanksgiving. And as we look more carefully we see it is all very full of parallels. The singers in both cases stand by a sea—the Red Sea of Egypt, and heaven's sea of fire,—and they are each singing in an attitude and strain of deliverance and freedom from enemies and of victory. And the sentiments of the two songs are the same. God's great power and display of judgment, and the acknowledgment of all nations. I. When I find an event like the old Israelitish victory, or a song like that of Moses, carried forward and appearing in the future heavenly history and

combined with Christ's victory and song, IT LIGHTS UP HUMAN LIFE WITH A NEW MEANING AND RADIANCE. 1. It has, in the first place, this value: it connects the end with the beginning. How early that old victory and song of Moses were—one of the very first human victories under God's guidance! How far away seems that first victory from the heavenly end, when there shall be no more struggle or pain! How since Moses multitudes and generations and companies of men have all had their contests again and again! How, with every day, it comes to each one of us! How premature seems the old song of victory when a new enemy is to come immediately! How ceaseless seems the struggle to us! And so God puts into one phrase for us the earliest and last song of victory, the beginning and the end, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, the victory of Moses over Pharaoh and one evil, and Christ's victory over all evil and all enemies. No matter how early in the struggle you may be, the end is shown, and Christ's victory is coupled with it, and you are to think of them together. Do not say, discouragingly, "The contest will be renewed again in another way to-morrow"; but say, "The contest will end surely, and finally victoriously in the Lamb's triumph." 1. But there is a better, deeper thought of encouragement than this, which comes out of that connection—"the song of Moses and of the Lamb." 2. It is that all righteous issues, and all struggles of men, are parts of Christ's issue and struggle and victory; and so each man's song is sung with and in the new song of the Lamb. We need to think of this. Christ's contest and death and victory were not all a history alongside of ours, to which we can look up from our own and take courage; but they contain ours and all the struggles and victories of the servants of God everywhere. See how close and dear that makes Christ's life to you. Oh, as I am led through a life's discipline, am told to do without this or that, am bid to contend with this or that selfishness, am pressed hard by this or that sorrow, am tempted to give up my trust in God's care and to be sour or reckless, how it helps me to go and put all this experience into the gospel story, to translate it into the struggle of the Lamb of God, to think of it all as a part of His issue. My struggle and victory to-day is no mere disjointed, separated thing, done alone and without lasting effect, but it is a part of a great victory of the Lamb already won. This little song, which I sing through my tears, as I conquer a hard temptation and struggle through a sea of evil, is a part of Christ's song. It does not lose itself in earth's air and die, but it shall live in Christ's song to the end of eternity, when tears are all wiped away. 3. And so that brings me to a third thing which the phrase teaches us about our life on earth—it is that God would have it happy. Earth's song He continues into heaven, not its tears: Moses' song of victory, not of his troubles. Are you singing any hymn of victory to-day? Are you joyful over a dead sin, or are you merely merry in slavery or sad in defeat?

II. WHAT WE LEARN OF HEAVEN AND OF ITS LIFE FROM THE TEXT. 1. First, it gives us this thought of heaven: as a place in which each one of us has a marked individuality and history, even in Christ's presence. Heaven would be an unbearable place unless we lived ourselves individually—enjoyed and felt ourselves. And this thought is given us in the fact that the song sung by Moses the servant of God is remembered and repeated there. Human names and experiences and victories are mentioned there in the very company of the name and experience and victory of the Lamb. A city of kings will heaven be; all natures marked and distinct; all with a history and a claim to distinct remark and notice. 2. Then there is this further thought—the communion of saints. They not only all join in the song of the Lamb, but in the song of Moses the servant of God. They use the words which commemorate not only Christ's victory, but the victory of Moses too. Think of it: the voices that all go up to Christ, all also using Moses' experience and Moses' song words! It is that Christian truth: Your experience is mine, and mine is yours. Every man's victory I sing, and every man sings mine, as part of that same salvation of the Lamb which has rescued and sanctified you or me or the man who sings. Oh, get some of this heavenly power of communion of saints now! Do not let anything cut you off from a life that is showing God's victory. Sing its song; put yourself into its experience and place, and you will sing your own song and fill your own place all the better and more fully. 3. Then, lastly, this text tells me of the thoughts which are the atmosphere of heaven. Often we wonder—"What is the new song? What will be my state of mind—what my sentiments?" This passage tells us. The song of the Lamb is the song of Moses, the servant of God. The words of the song of heaven. They are but the

nobler, fuller use of Moses' lyric words. Heaven's song is a new setting to God's harp of any song we have sung on gaining a spiritual victory over enemies by God's power here and now and in this earthly life. Let a man triumphantly resist a temptation, conquer a passion, win a new grade of character by God's power, and he has the very sentiments exalting and moving his heart and life which the new song will have in richest and completest harmony. (*Fred. Brooks.*) *The song of triumph*:—The life of the redeemed is here represented as a service of song. This will not seem surprising if we reflect on the function of song. There has never been a time in which music has played so large a part in the general life as it does to-day. What is music? It is not the mere pastime of an idle hour, or the mere sensuous gratification of an artistic mind. 1. It is a language, the highest, except poetry, that we are acquainted with, if indeed, in fundamental particulars they can be separated the one from the other. It is often the only language that can give expression to the highest thoughts of the mind or the deepest feelings of the heart. It is also to be noticed that all life, as it approaches perfection, becomes melodious. The life of heaven, then, is a service of song, not after any idle or sensuous fashion, but because the life of heaven is life perfected. Man in complete accord with his surroundings, man moving in absolute harmony with the will of God, man redeemed from all imperfections, and cleansed from all sin by the very constitution of his nature, is man melodious. 2. It is worth noticing, further, that there is no music like the music of triumph, and no songs like those which celebrate deliverance. And I take it as beautifully significant, that the burden of this song should be what it is, and that it should be called "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." Moses, the much-tried servant of God, the heroic leader of a stiffnecked people; and the Lamb, the eternal symbol of sacrificial suffering and sorrow. For it is a mistake to suppose that noble sorrow nobly borne silences the voice of song. Shelley says, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts." It is partly true; it is mainly sentimental. But this is wholly true, that sorrow nobly borne is impotent to hang or keep the harp upon the willows. Song breaks from it as the phoenix from the flames. The most triumphant poem of this century is "In Memoriam," and we know the sable circumstances of its birth. It is even so. Some birds sing best in the dark. And in the gracious providence of God beauty is not far away from ashes. The oil of joy exudes from mourning, and the garment of praise often covers a spirit of heaviness. 3. It is further suggested by this vision of the redeemed, that the conquerors of all ages take part in this song. The conflict varies from age to age. The beast that has power to make war against the saints assumes many forms. And the radiant hope here "set before us," is that all who have overcome, will unite in the eternal song. For there is no power which can unite the hearts of men like music, as they know full well who march to battle with the beating of the drum or the notes of the pibroch. Now think of a society gathered from all ages and lands, filled with a life of which song is the only natural and adequate expression, and you have a picture of "the better land" as John saw it in his prophetic dream. It is likely that it occurred to him in this form, as he watched from his lonely rock some sunset glories blazing far and wide across the blue Mediterranean. Out there, on the very verge of the horizon, he catches sight of the faithful ones, no longer groaning beneath the oppressor, no longer struggling with the beast, and no longer divided among themselves: one perfect society, telling in unending song of the wondrous works of God, proclaiming the eternal vindication of His just and righteous ways, and reminding us that the confusions of time are only in appearance, and that the essential harmony will be made manifest by and by. Conclusion: 1. Let us expect conflict. "No cross, no crown." 2. Let us look for victory from the right source. "Looking unto Jesus," &c. (*James Thew.*) *The song of the glorified*:—I. THE JOYFUL EMPLOYMENT OF GLORIFIED SPIRITS.—1. The song in which all the saints shall join in heaven is a song of triumph over dangerous and powerful enemies. 2. Saints in glory are here said to sing the song of the Lamb, or a song in which they are instructed by the Lamb of God, which has respect to the glorious deliverance which He hath wrought out for them. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THIS SONG. 1. The great and wondrous nature of the works of God shall be made the subject of devout and joyful celebration in the world of glory. (1) The vast works of creation will then be seen in all their magnitude and beauty. Many glorious effects of God's creative power, of which we have now no knowledge, will then be disclosed. From an elevated point will glorified spirits survey the works of creation, and be pleasingly astonished at their

almost boundless immensity, their beautiful order and gradation. (2) Then also the great designs of Providence will be laid open in all their lustre and glory. As the intellectual sight will then be amazingly strengthened and improved; so the darkness which now veils many of God's providential dispensations shall then be dispersed. (3) Then also shall the godlike purposes of Divine grace to save many sinners from hell, and bring them to heaven, be displayed in all their loveliness; their origin and end will be fully disclosed, and furnish the saints in glory with rich occasion for admiration and joy. These great and marvellous works of God will be then perfectly known, and harmoniously celebrated. (4) The infinite power of God, which is a just object of terror to the wicked, and which will inevitably plunge them into perdition, is the source of consolation and the subject of praise to all true believers. Holy pleasure mixed with solemn awe attends a contemplative view of this Divine attribute even in the present life. In heaven Jehovah shall be praised as the Lord God Almighty. This character will excite the profoundest reverence as well as the highest pleasure in the breasts of the heavenly worshippers, for as it will proclaim the infinite distance there is between them and their maker, so it will insure to them everlasting peace and safety. For what power can control the will, or alter the purposes of Him who in might is infinite? The justice and truth of God's ways are celebrated in heaven as well as their great and marvellous nature. "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." (1) In the upper world glorified spirits celebrate the justice of God—His justice towards friends and foes, the perfect righteousness of His dealings towards all ranks of creatures in heaven, on earth, and in hell. There in a particular manner do they acknowledge the justice and propriety of all those events which puzzled and disturbed their minds when here below. They have no accusation to offer, no complaint to bring against the King of saints; in the whole of His management they heartily acquiesce, and sing a lofty song of praise to His justice and rectitude. (2) But the heavenly choir celebrate the truth as well as the justice of their Maker. Just and true are Thy ways. As a God of Truth the Almighty hath invariably revealed Himself in all ages, and this title very properly belongs to Him (Psa. c. 5). As such He is justly extolled by His people now, but in a much nobler manner shall He be praised on this account hereafter. Then the truth of His predictions to the world at large; His inviolable regard to the promises made to the Church in every age and in every state; His fidelity to every individual that has made or shall make a part of it: His steady attachment to that covenant which through His Son He enters into with every true believer, and His immutable care to confer the blessings it contains, shall be the topics of joyful acclamation by glorified spirits. (3) The people of God are repeatedly spoken of in the sacred oracles under the title of saints, "Thou King of saints." Now these pure and happy souls have God for their King. The great God indeed is the Sovereign of all His creatures. He exercises universal dominion over the works of His hands, and His right thereto is founded on the nature of things, and the relation He bears to them. He is the Creator and of course the Sovereign and Lord of all. All creatures owe Him subjection and obedience, and over all He rules without control. But saints are under His peculiar government. He is their King in a sense which can be applied to none but such as fear and love Him, and have His image drawn upon their hearts. Application: 1. Let us be thankful for the pleasing descriptions of the heavenly world which are given us in the gospel of Christ. 2. Let the consideration of the state to which our deceased believing friends are advanced, and the manner in which they are employed, mitigate our sorrow on account of their removal hence. 3. Let the subject of the songs of Zion be improved for present comfort. Are the works of God no less just and true than they are great and marvellous? Do they as loudly proclaim his unspotted rectitude and inviolable faithfulness as the exceeding greatness of His power and majesty? Let every fearful thought then be instantly dismissed. Let every rebellious sigh be hushed in the Christian's breast. 4. Let us all be ambitious to join hereafter in this delightful song, and for that end let us now seek an interest in the Divine favour through the Redeemer. (*N. Jennings.*) *Israel in Egypt*:—I. REGARD THE POSITION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS EMBLEMATICAL OF OUR OWN. And here we observe that, like the Church of God, the vast host of Israel had been delivered from bondage. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, our God has led us forth from the place of our captivity, and joyfully we pursue our way through the wilderness. But with the children of Israel it was not all joy; they were free, but their master was at their heels. Pharaoh was loth to lose so valuable a nation of

servants. Affrighted Israel beheld her infuriated oppressor close at her rear, and trembled for the issue; even so it is with some of you; you think you must be driven back again like dumb cattle into Egypt, and once more become what you were. But once more: the children of Israel were in a position more wonderful than this. They came to the edge of the Red Sea; they feared their enemies behind; they could not fly on either hand, for they were flanked by mountains and stupendous rocks; one course only was open to them, and that course was through the sea. God commands them to go forward. The rod of Moses is outstretched, and the affrighted waters divide; a channel is left whilst the floods stand upright, and the waters are congealed in the heart of the sea. O living army of the living God! ye, like Israel, keep the floods of Providence still standing fast: but when the last of you shall be gone from this stage of action, God's fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now are standing, and your enemies shall be overwhelmed in the place through which you now walk safely.

II. THE TRIUMPH OF MOSES was a picture of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. Yes, the day is drawing nigh when God's enemies shall no longer make it necessary for God's providence to be apparently disturbed to save His people, when the great designs of God shall be accomplished, and therefore when the walls of water shall roll together, whilst in their inmost depths the everlasting burning fire shall still consume the wicked. Well, I now want to show you why it was that Moses triumphed, and why it is that by and by we shall triumph. One reason why Moses sung his song was because all Israel were safe. Oh! it is my strong belief that in heaven there shall not be a vacant throne. I rejoice that all who love the Lord below must at last attain to heaven. But, perhaps, the major part of the joy of Moses lay in the destruction of all the enemies of God. I see the trembling church, fearing to be overthrown: I mark her leaders bending their knees in solemn prayer, and crying, "Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thy heritage." But mine eye looks through the future with telescopic glance, and I see the happy period of the latter days when Christ shall reign triumphant.

III. SOME INTERESTING PARTICULARS IN THE SONG WHICH WILL DOUBTLESS HAVE A PLACE IN THE EVERLASTING ORCHESTRA OF THE REDEEMED when they shall praise the Most High.

1. The first thing I would have you notice in it is, that from beginning to end it is a praise of God, and of nobody else but God. The last song in this world, the song of triumph, shall be full of God, and of no one else. Here you praise the instrument; to-day you look on this man and on that, and you say, "Thank God for this minister, and for this man." To-day you say, "Blessed be God for Luther, who shook the Vatican, and thank God for Whitfield, who stirred up a slumbering church"; but in that day you shall not sing of Luther, nor of Whitfield, nor of any of the mighty ones of God's hosts; forgotten shall their names be for a season, even as the stars refuse to shine when the sun himself appeareth. The song shall be unto Jehovah and Jehovah only.

2. And next note that this song celebrated something of the fierceness of the enemy. I believe the last song of the redeemed, when they shall ultimately triumph, will celebrate in heavenly stanzas the wrath of man overcome by God. Sometimes after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight, and of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and of instruments of war which have been taken from the enemy. Now, to use that illustration as I think it may be properly used, the day is coming when fury, and wrath, and hatred, and strife shall all be woven into a song: and the weapons of our enemies, when taken from them, shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God.

3. And then note how they sang the total overthrow of the enemy. I believe that at the last, a part of our triumph will be the fact that there is not one left. We shall look abroad throughout the earth, and see it all a level sea, and not one foeman pursuing us—"not one—not one"! Raise thyself never so high, O thou deceiver, thou canst not live, for not one shall escape. Lift thy head never so proudly, O despot, thou canst not live, for not one shall escape. O heir of heaven, not one sin shall cross the Jordan after thee; not one shall pass the Red Sea to overtake thee; but this shall be the summit of thy triumph—Not one, not one! not one of them is left.

4. Furthermore, in this song of Moses you will notice there is one peculiar beauty. Moses not only rejoiced for what had been done, but for the future consequences of it. He says—"The people of Canaan, whom we are about to attack, will now be seized with sudden fear; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone." Oh! I think I hear them singing that too, sweetly and softly—"as still as a stone." How would the words come full, like gentle

thunder heard in the distance—"as still as a stone." And when we shall get on the other side the flood, see the triumph over our enemies, and behold our Master reigning, this will form a part of our song—that they must henceforth be "as still as a stone." There will be a hell, but it will not be a hell of roaring devils, as it now is. They shall be "as still as a stone." 5. And last of all, the song concludes by noticing the eternity of God's reign, and this will always make a part of the triumphant song. They sang—"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Then I can suppose the whole band broke out into their loudest strains of music. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Part of the melody of heaven will be—"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." That song has cheered us here—"The Lord reigneth; blessed be my rock!" And that song shall be our exultation there. "The Lord reigneth for ever and ever." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Great and marvellous are Thy works.—*The works of God, as King of saints, great and marvellous*:—I. THE WORK OF REDEMPTION, WHICH GOD HAS WROUGHT, AND IN WHICH THE SAINTS ARE PECULIARLY INTERESTED, IS A MARVELLOUS WORK. II. THE VARIOUS REVELATIONS BY WHICH GOD HAS BROUGHT THE SAINTS, IN THE SEVERAL AGES OF THE WORLD, TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS REDEMPTION, ARE ALSO MARVELLOUS. III. THE DISPENSATION OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE TOWARD THE CHURCH, IN CORRECTING AND PUNISHING HER FOR HER DECLENSIONS, AND IN DELIVERING HER OUT OF DANGERS AND AFFLICTIONS, ARE GREAT AND MARVELLOUS. IV. THAT WORK, BY WHICH GOD FITS AND PREPARES THE SAINTS FOR GLORY, IS GREAT AND MARVELLOUS. 1. The conversion of a sinner is a great work, as it makes in him a mighty change. 2. This is a marvellous work, as it is a work of marvellous grace. 3. This is a marvellous work, as it is wrought in a marvellous manner. 4. This is a great work, as it is effected by Divine power. V. THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE TOWARD PARTICULAR SAINTS, IN BRINGING THEM TO GLORY, ARE GREAT AND WONDERFUL. (J. Lathrop, D.D.)

God's wonderful works:—It is said of Napoleon that when Marshal Duroc, an avowed infidel, was telling a very improbable story, giving his opinion that it was quite true, the Emperor quietly remarked, "There are some men capable of believing everything but the Bible." Infidels look at the Holy Bible superficially, and find fault with the form in which it appears, and reject it because of its mysterious contents, thereby maintaining that religion ends where mysteries begin. It is true that there are events too high, too wonderful and too deep, such things as pass our understanding, recorded in God's most holy Word. For instance, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, Three Persons yet one God, is most mysterious. This we cannot possibly understand, but then God does not ask us to, only to accept it with childlike faith. Again, the whole scheme of our Redemption from beginning to end is a profound mystery. Now look at some of God's mysterious and marvellous works in creation. 1. And first in the "field." Think of the various kinds of small seeds, such as wheat, barley, oats, and rye, which the sower takes in his hands, sows, and leaves in the earth to take care of themselves, but really to be looked after and to be taken care of by God. 2. Furthermore, God cares for our pleasures and happiness as well as for our sustenance. This may be seen in the abounding and universal beauty of this magnificent world, where everything works so silently, so surely, and so harmoniously, thereby obeying the laws ordained by its Maker. Oh, let us pray earnestly against harbouring the spirit which, indeed, observes the works of God and of Christ, which simply arouses our curiosity, "makes us marvel, and leave Him, and go our way," as the Scribes and Pharisees did when put to silence. 3. Again, not only once a year, as in the harvest, are the marvellous works of God visible. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy work." What a glorious sight by day to behold the "sun, which cometh forth out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course," and by night to see the clear moon and the twinkling stars! Can we look up there, and not think of God the Maker and Upholder of them all? Alas for us if we can and then simply "marvel and go our way" without a thought of Him. Whilst we accept mysteries in the "natural world," shall we reject "Bible mysteries"? (J. T. Hughes.)

Just and true are Thy ways.—*The rectitude of God*:—I. THE DEMANDS OF HIS LAW ATTEST THE TRUTH OF THIS TESTIMONY. The Heavenly Teacher has reduced all the demands which the Eternal Governor makes upon us to a twofold command. 1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c. Is this demand just? This depends upon three things. (1) Whether we have the power of loving any one supremely. (2) Whether God has attributes adapted to awaken

this love within us. (3) Whether these attributes are revealed with sufficient clearness to our minds. The affirmative to these things must be admitted by all. 2. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you." Not "whatsoever men do unto you," that might be sinful; but whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you. Would you have them false, dishonest, unkind, tyrannic, towards you? Whatsoever ye would that they should be to you, be so to them. Can anything be more just? II. THE INTUITIONS OF HIS MORAL CREATURES ATTEST THE TRUTH OF THIS TESTIMONY. In all moral intelligences there is—1. An intuitive sense of the right. All have an inbred sentiment of right and wrong. This sentiment implies a moral standard, and what is that standard but God? 2. There is an intuitive love of the right. All moral souls love the right in the abstract; they are bound to do it. "I delight in the law of God after the inner man." All consciences go with God. 3. There is an intuitive remorse. Misery springs up in the soul from a conscious departure from the right. Cain, David, Belshazzar, Judas, are examples. 4. There is an intuitive appeal to God under the wrong as the Friend of the right. Oppressed humanity involuntarily looks to God as Judge of all the earth. Deep in the soul of the moral creation is the feeling that God's ways are just and right. No argument can destroy this consciousness. III. THE MEDIATION OF HIS SON ATTESTS THE TRUTH OF THIS TESTIMONY. 1. His life was the development of Divine righteousness. He was incarnate rectitude. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." 2. His death was the highest homage to Divine rectitude. He could have escaped death. It was the inner sense of right that urged Him on. 3. His system is the promoter of Divine righteousness. His truth inculcates it; His Spirit promotes it. His Spirit comes to "convince the world of sin, righteousness," &c. IV. THE RETRIBUTIONS OF HIS GOVERNMENT ATTEST THE TRUTH OF THIS TESTIMONY. Look at the expulsion of Adam, the deluge, the burning of Sodom, the extermination of the Canaanites, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews. Look on to the retribution of the last day, and see what rectitude marks the whole (Matt. xxv.). (*Homilist.*) *God's ways just and true:*—Take a straight stick and put it into the water, and it will seem crooked. Why? Because we look upon it through two mediums, air, and water: there lies the *deceptio visus*; thence it is that we cannot discern aright. Thus the proceedings of God in His justice, which in themselves are straight, without the least obliquity, seem unto us crooked; that wicked men should prosper, and good men be afflicted; that servants should ride on horseback and princes go on foot; these are things that make the best Christians stagger in their judgments. And why? but because they look upon God's proceedings through a double medium, of flesh and spirit; that so all things seem to go cross though, indeed, they are right enough. And hence it is that God's proceedings in His justice are not so well discerned—the eyes of man alone being not competent judges thereof.

Vers. 5, 6. *The seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.—Angelic agencies of retribution:*—Note, 1. The instruments employed by God for executing His wrath upon sinners—angels, seven angels: not that He needs them, but He is pleased to make use of them, and they are but instruments in His hand, who receive all their efficacy from the hand that uses them. 2. From whence these seven angels come, namely, out of the temple, more immediately from the presence of God, implying that they came forth to execute vengeance by God's special directions, and consequently that the work was very well pleasing unto God which they went about. 3. How they are furnished, having seven plagues—namely, to inflict upon the idolatrous enemies of the Church. 4. In and after what manner these angels were apparelled and appeared. (1) They were clothed in pure and white linen, to denote the holiness of their persons, as also the holiness of that work which they had then in hand. (2) This clothing of theirs was girded to them, expressing thereby their great readiness for, and their great alacrity in, their work. (3) The girdle wherewith they were girded was a golden girdle, exactly answering the habit of the high priest, when he entered into the holy of holies, to inquire of God, or came out with an answer from God. 5. From the whole learn, that when the Lord comes to pull down Babylon, as well as to build up Sion, He will appear in glory; the angels are God's special ministers; when they go forth to pour out the vials of His wrath upon Babylon, they appear gloriously apparelled, glittering like the high priest, and girded with golden girdles. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Genuine discipline of soul:*—I. The source of genuine soul discipline. "After that (these things) I looked (saw), and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the

testimony in heaven was opened." The discipline, as we have seen, was of a painful character. It involved "seven angels" with "seven plagues." Whence did it proceed? Not from secondary instrumentalities, fortuitous circumstances, or a heartless, rigorous fatality, but direct from the presence of the Infinite. The language here points to the inner compartment of the old Jewish tabernacle, known as the "Holy of Holies." There the Jew regarded Jehovah as especially revealing Himself to them, and as communicating to them His ideas and plans. To a genuinely disciplined soul all influences from heaven tending to purify and ennoble are regarded as coming direct from the presence of the Great Father. Its inner eye, so to speak, is so opened and quickened that it glances into the very shrine of the Almighty. II. The MINISTERS of genuine soul discipline. 1. They are complete in number and qualification. "Seven angels" and "seven plagues." 2. They go forth direct from His presence. "Came out of the temple," &c. 3. They are divinely marked and attired as God's priests. "Clothed (arrayed) in pure and white linen." 4. They have a commission of severity. True soul-education involves pain. The very severity is a blessing. III. The INDISPENSABILITY of genuine soul discipline. "No man (no one) was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (should be finished). The idea suggested is that no man could enter into the shrine or into the immediate presence of God until the discipline had been fully accomplished. (*David Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **Seven golden vials full of the wrath of God.**—*The wrath of God*:—Observe—1. That what was called seven plagues in the foregoing verse is here called seven golden vials full of the wrath of God: in this verse vials are full cups. Vials of wrath are prepared when the measures of a people's sins are filled up; full cups of sin are followed with full vials of God's wrath. Next, these vials are said to be of gold, signifying that these judgments proceed from a just God, with whom there is no corruption nor iniquity in judgments, He being holy in all His ways, and righteous in all His works. These vials are also said to be full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever, as an aggravation of the same, it not being like the wrath of a mortal man, of short continuance; it is the wrath of Him that ever lives to maintain His wrath, and to uphold and sustain the sinner under the execution and infliction of this wrath, that the sinner cannot run from Him. 2. The executioners of this wrath are said to be seven angels. The angels, which are merciful attendants upon the godly, are also at God's command, the executioners of His wrath upon the wicked. These angels are here said to be seven, to signify that God's judgments upon His Church's adversaries shall be heavy and great; one angel plagued all Egypt, and destroyed Sennacherib's mighty host, but here went out seven angels to destroy antichrist. 3. The tremendous dreadfulness of this wrath, intimated by filling the temple with smoke, thereby signifying that the wrath of God, kindled against His enemies, shall be unto them like a devouring and consuming fire, before the flame of which burst forth, a cloud of smoke appears. Learn—That almighty God is glorified in the destruction as well as in the salvation of sinners; His glory is as well seen in His smoking wrath against the wicked, as in His saving mercy towards the godly. The temple was filled with smoke, from the glory of God, and from His power; it follows, no man was able to enter into the temple; that is, to deprecate God's anger and supplicate His mercy, or to avert the plagues threatened and now just ready to be inflicted; when mercy has been long offered and despised, the Lord at last becomes inexorable, and will suffer none to intercede or plead with Him (*Jer. xv. 1*). (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

VER. 1. **Pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.**—*Predestined suffering in the government of the world*:—I. All the dispensations of this suffering ARE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF GOD. "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." From the very Shrine of the Almighty, the

Holy of Holies, He deals out and regulates every item. 1. He orders their agents. Each of the "seven angels" or messengers are sent forth by Him. "Go your ways." The Supreme Governor of the universe conducts His affairs through a vast system of secondary instrumentalities. There is not a pain that quivers in the nerve of any sentient being that comes not from Him. Is not this a soothing and a strengthening thought under all the dispensations of sorrow? 2. He appoints their seasons. The "seven angels" do not all come together, each has its period. 3. He fixes their places. Each of the seven angels who, under God, are to dispense the plagues, has his place assigned him. Each had his "vial," or bowl, and each bowl had a place on which it was to be poured. The first came upon "the earth," the second on "the sea," the third upon "the rivers and fountains," the fourth upon "the sun," the fifth upon "the seat (throne) of the beast," the sixth upon "the great river Euphrates," and the seventh "into the air." Whether there is a reference here to plagues in Egypt, or sufferings elsewhere, I know not. 4. He determines their character. The sufferings that came forth from the bowls were not of exactly the same kind or amount, some seemed more terrible and tremendous than others. The sufferings of some are distinguished by physical diseases, some by social bereavements, some by secular losses and disappointments, some by mental perplexities, some by moral anguish, &c. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness." II. All the dispensations of this suffering HAVE A GREAT MORAL PURPOSE. They are not malignant but merciful. They are not to ruin souls but to save them. They are curative elements in the painful cup of life; they are storms to purify the moral atmosphere of the world. 1. The righteous punishment of cruel persecution. "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." 2. The righteous punishment of supreme worldliness. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat (throne) of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues." Worldliness in the ascendant is indeed like this beast portrayed in the Apocalypse. It sits supreme; it has a throne, a crown, a sceptre that extends over all. 3. The overwhelming ruin of organised wrong. Great Babylon, what is it? The moral evils of the world organised into its metropolis. Falsehood, sensuality, pride, ambition, impiety, fraud, tyranny, embodied in a mighty city. This is the Babylon, and all unredeemed men are citizens in it. The Divine purpose is to destroy it. All His dispensations are against it, and will one day shiver it to pieces. Take courage, be of good cheer! III. All the dispensations of this suffering HAVE AN INFLUENCE CO-EXTENSIVE WITH THE UNIVERSE. There was not a drop from the bowl in either of the angel's hands that terminated where it fell. The contents of these bowls are not like showers falling on the rocks in summer, which having touched them are then exhaled for ever. No, they continue to operate. The bowl that fell on the earth became an evil and painful sore, that which fell on the sea became blood and death, that which fell upon the sun scorched mankind, that which fell on the beast spread darkness and agony in all directions, that which fell upon the Euphrates produced a drought, and drew out of the mouth of the dragon wild beasts and strange dragons, the bowl that poured out its contents on the air produced lightnings, and thunders, and earthquakes, causing Babylon to be riven asunder, and every mountain and valley to flee away. Observe—1. Nothing in the world of mind terminates with itself. "No man liveth unto himself." Each step we give will touch chords that will vibrate through all the arches of immensity. 2. Whatever goes forth from mind exerts an influence on the domain of matter. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *The first five bowls*:—I. ERE THE END COMETH, GOD'S JUDGMENTS OF WRATH WILL BE POURED OUT UPON THE WORLD. II. GOD HATH HIS "BOWLS" IN WHICH ARE THE CONTENTS OF HIS WRATH WAITING TO BE OUTPOURED. III. THE BRINGING OUT OF THESE HIDDEN FORCES IS FORESEEN AND DETERMINED. IV. WHEN THE ANGELS OF JUDGMENT POUR OUT THE "BOWLS," ALL NATURE MAY BE FULL OF WHIPS AND STINGS (cf. vers. 1-4, 8-11). V. THE EFFECT OF THESE JUDGMENTS ON UNGODLY MEN WILL BE TO EXCITE TO ANGER, AND NOT TO BRING TO REPENTANCE. "They repented not"; "they blasphemed" (vers. 9, 11). VI. THE HOLY ONES SEE IN THE DIVINE RETRIBUTION A MANIFESTATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. In ver. 5 "the angel of the waters" celebrates the righteousness of God, and in ver. 7 "the altar" is said to do it; so the Revised Version reads; meaning, probably, the souls of the martyrs beneath it (chap. vi. 9). Only those beings who are in full sympathy with the Divine righteousness and love are in a position to judge rightly of the Divine procedure. Note—1. Although all Scripture points to trouble on a vastly greater scale than we as yet see it, ere the end shall come, yet on a smaller scale God's judg-

ments are ever at work. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." That which is a bulwark to the good is a detective to the evil. 2. Let us not forget that the wondrous way in which the balance of nature's forces is preserved, so as to bring us life and peace and comfort, is owing, not to nature, but to God. 3. In our daily life we can sing of both mercy and judgment. No cup is all sweetness. A dash of bitter mingles with all. Not all bitter, lest we should pine away; not all sweet, lest we should become insensible to life's peril and responsibilities. 4. We are indebted to Divine mercy even for the sanctifying effect of our trials. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) They repented not to give Him glory.—*The hardened heart*:—"They repented not to give Him glory." This impenitence is told of in chap. ix. 20, and in this chapter again at vers. 11 and 21. I. A VERY CERTAIN FACT. The late Mr. Kingsley, in his book, "The Roman and the Teuton," draws out at length the evidence both of the horrible sufferings and the yet more horrible impenitence of the Roman people in the days of their empire's fall. He refers to these very verses as accurately describing the condition of things in those awful days, when the people of Rome "gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed," &c. (ver. 11). And it is to Rome and her fall that St. John is here alluding. There can hardly be doubt of that. But the sinners at Rome were not the only ones who, in spite of the judgments of God resting upon them, have, nevertheless, hardened their hearts. Who has not known of such things? II. AND VERY WONDERFUL. We say a burnt child dreads the fire, but it is evident that they who have been "scorched with great heat" (ver. 9) by the righteous wrath of God are yet not afraid to incur that wrath again. Nothing strikes us more than the persistent way in which, in the "day of provocation in the wilderness," the Israelites went on sinning, notwithstanding all that it brought upon them in the way of punishment. III. AND VERY AWFUL. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." "Why should ye be stricken any more?"—no good comes of it, punishment does not make any difference. IV. BUT YET NOT INEXPLICABLE. For—1. Times of such distress as are told of here are just the most unfavourable times of all others for that serious, earnest thought which would lead to repentance. Distress distracts the mind, drags it hither and thither, so that it cannot stay itself upon God. To trust to the hour of death to turn unto God is, indeed, to build upon the sand. 2. Resentment against their ill-treatment holds their mind more than aught else. Where that fear is not, God's wrath will exasperate, enrage, and harden, but there will be no repentance. 3. They attribute their sufferings to every cause but the true one. 4. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. viii. 11). (*S. Conway, B.A.*) *Judgments and no repentance: repentance and no salvation*:—I. JUDGMENTS, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY PRODUCE A KIND OF REPENTANCE. 1. Judgment may produce a carnal repentance—a repentance that is of the flesh, and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed: he becomes another man, but not a new man. The thunders, and the storms, and the hail, and the noisome sores can produce in men nothing more than a fleshly repentance; and flesh repenting is still flesh, and tends to corruption. 2. And hence, again, it is but a transient repentance. They repent but for a season. While they see the immediate evil of their sin in its results, they cry out as if they really hated sin; but their hatred is only a little tiff, which lasts for a while, and then they make friends with their sins, as Pilate made friends with Herod. Their goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it passes away. 3. Such a repentance is superficial. It only affects the surface of the man. It does not go to the heart, it is hardly more than skin deep. Beware of a superficial repentance, for God abhors it. God is not mocked; He sees the loathsomeness of the ulcer through the film which seeks to hide it. 4. The awful terrors of God may produce a despairing repentance. What an awful thing it is when the law of God and the terrors of God work upon the conscience, and arouse all a man's fears, and yet he will not fly to Christ! II. JUDGMENTS DO NOT AND CANNOT OF THEMSELVES PRODUCE A REPENTANCE SUCH AS GIVES GOD GLORY. "They repented not to give Him glory." Now, this not giving God glory is a very important omission, and one which vitiates the whole matter. True repentance gives God glory in many ways. Is yours true repentance or not? That is the question. 1. It reverences and adores God's omniscience. It is a confession of the fact of God's knowledge, and the truthfulness of His statements, for the man says, "O Lord, I am what Thy Word says I am. Before Thee have I sinned. In Thy sight have I done evil. Thou knowest me altogether, and I adore

Thine omniscience." 2. The truly penitent gives glory to the righteousness of God in His law. Impenitence rails at the law as too severe, speaks of transgression as a trifle, and of future punishment as cruelty; but the truly repentant soul admires the law, and champions it even against its own self. Do you know all this in your own heart? 3. The sincerely penitent also adores and glorifies the justice of God in His punishment of transgression. Is sin really sinful to you? Do you see its desert of hell? If not, your repentance needs to be repented of. 4. True repentance glorifies the sovereignty of God in His mercy, saying, "Let Him do as He wills, for His will is holy love." 5. Further, the man has repented to the glory of God when he spies out that there is a way by which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly—when he sees the Lord Jesus Christ, the adorable Son of God, coming in our human nature and becoming the substitute for sinners, and the sacrifice for sin. 6. For, mark you, it glorifies God in one other way—by setting the sinner ever afterwards craving after holiness. "The burnt child dreads the fire"; and the sinner dreads sin when he has been delivered from the flame of it by the Lord Jesus. III. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY, THROUGH OUR HARDNESS OF HEART, INVOLVE US IN GREATER SIN. 1. If God has chastened you very much, until He is saying, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" then all this chastening which you have despised involves you in deeper sin, because you now sin with a clearer knowledge of what sin really is. 2. To many lives judgments also introduce the element of falsehood. The man vowed that if he recovered from sickness he would fear God. He was sick, and a saint he would be. But when he got well, ah! how much of a saint was he? 3. There are some whose conduct has in it the element of deliberate hatred of God; for these have had time now to see which way evil goes, and yet they follow it. They love sin as sin. 4. This introduces the element of presumption, deliberation, resolve; and when men sin so, there is a talent of lead in the measure of their iniquity, and it weighs exceedingly heavy. IV. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE TO BE VIEWED WITH GREAT DISCRETION. He who studies them must do it with solemn care. 1. Judgments tend to good. Do not forget that. They ought to tend to good to you who are exercised by them. How many are aroused to think of better things by sickness in their own persons, or sudden death in others! National judgments are frequently a ministry of grace. 2. Judgments do impress some men. Many will come to hear a sermon just after a dear baby has died, or a brother or father has been taken away. Death whips the careless into thought. 3. Some, no doubt, are sweetly subdued by judgments, when these are qualified with grace. The grace of God working with their afflictions, they bow themselves beneath the chastening hand; and when they do this, it is good for them that they are afflicted. 4. But then, next, still let it be recollected that these things will not work good of themselves. I want you to remember this, because I have known people say, "Well, if I were afflicted I might be converted. If I lay sick I might be saved." Oh, do not think so. Sickness and sorrow of themselves are no helps to salvation. Pain and poverty are not evangelists; disease and despair are not apostles. Look at the lost in hell. Suffering has effected no good in them. 5. Oh, that God would lead you to repent now, before any of His judgments fall upon you! Why should we not repent at once? Surely we ought to repent of doing wrong when we perceive that we are wronging so good a God. Permit me also to say to you how much nobler and sweeter a thing it is to be drawn than to be driven. Must you be beaten to Christ? And then, again, recollect, you can repent now so much more clearly than in the hour of sickness. God helping you, this is a very good hour for repenting. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 10, 11. The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast.—*Punishment concentrated upon the sinner*:—1. As we see in the plagues of Egypt, so we see here, that the Lord begins farther off at first, to wit, at the earth, waters, and sun, before He comes nearer to the throne or seat of the beast; which should teach men, before God come near them with His plagues or punishments, to draw near to God by true and timely repentance. 2. The wonted glory and lustre that the beast's kingdom had by ignorance, error, and idolatry, is now turned to darkness; which teaches us, that all seeming good, profit, pleasure, advancement, which is got by sin, ends at last in the contrary. 3. As nothing could hinder the darkness of Egypt, so nothing could hinder this; which teaches us, that when God is to punish, none are able to impede His judgments. 4. It is said here, that they gnawed their tongues for pain, where we see that as the Lord makes the guilty conscience

of the wicked to be their own accuser and condemner, so He makes them likewise to be their own tormentor and burden. 5. We see here again the Lord's suitable judgments to the sin; they seduced and sinned by their tongue, therefore here they are punished in their tongue; wherefore beware in what manner, or by what member we sin, lest by the same we be likewise punished. (*William Guild, D.D.*)

Vers. 12-16. The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates . . . Three unclean spirits.—*The mission of the three spirits*:—The river Euphrates, the dividing stream (in old time) between Israel and Assyria, between Israel and Babylon—the dividing stream (in typical language) between the Israel of God and the foes of God, between the Church and the world, between the disciples of Jesus Christ and the opposing hosts and powers of evil—is dried up, by the outpouring of the sixth vial, that the last confederacy of infidelity and ungodliness may be tempted onward to its ruin. These vials are vials of wrath. The long-suffering of ages is at length exhausted: the measure of earth's iniquity is at last full. The time is come for a decisive battle: the kings from the east, from the enemy's side of the river, shall be encouraged to cross over, shall be permitted to pass over dryshod, that they may throw themselves, in all their proud superiority of strength and numbers, upon "the camp of the saints" and upon "the beloved city." Such is the parable. Enough of palliatives and enough of compromises: enough of human expedients for harmonising the irreconcilable, for making truth speak the speech of compliment, and toning down revelation till human reason shall flatter herself that she invented it: not thus can the true life be lived, the reality of death faced, or a boundless eternity entered: not thus shall place ever be found for that "new heaven and new earth," "in which dwelleth righteousness," in which "the tabernacle of God is with men." There must first be a war and a battle: the war of spiritual combatants, the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Thus we are enabled to contemplate, with awe but not with dismay, all that growing boldness and insolence of unbelief which seems likely to be characteristic of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is all working up to a consummation—a consummation foreordained of God—a consummation revealed by Him in prophecy. The three unclean spirits which gather the invading powers to the battle of the great day are said to issue from the mouth of the dragon, and from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. The reference is to the section of the three enemies, occupying the twelfth and two following chapters of this book. 1. The dragon is described to us in the twelfth chapter by figures and names, which leave no doubt of their meaning. He is expressly termed the devil and Satan—the old serpent, with evident reference to the history of man's fall—the deceiver of the whole world—the accuser of the brethren. He is described as a dragon—that fabulous monster of antiquity, with its huge coils of serpent-like scales—here painted with seven heads, ten horns upon one of them, and seven crowns—telling at once of manifold versatility, giant strength, and more than regal dominion. He is described further as casting down to the earth the third part of the stars of heaven—to express at once the audacity of his presumption, and the superhuman sweep of his success. He stands before the woman clothed with the sun and crowned with the stars—emblem of the Church of God now travelling in birth with the Saviour of prophecy and of expectation—stands, I say, watching for the Incarnation, and eager to devour the Divine Child at the moment of His birth. Frustrated by the final rescue which transfers the imperilled Saviour, by ascension, to the throne of God in heaven—and himself receiving a defeat in the war with the glorified Christ which hurls him back, wrathful and revengeful, upon an earth not yet regenerated—he turns all his fury first upon the Church, which escapes from him into the wilderness, cared for by God Himself, who has prepared there her temporary home and her heavenly supplies—cared for by God, but helped even by the earth, who, in a sense wonderfully true to history, has sometimes even protected and favoured her—first, I say, upon the Church herself, and then (by a slight modification of the metaphor) upon the individual Christian, represented as not yet sharing the full security of the Church as a whole, as having still to fight for his life, though the Church is guaranteed from the once threatened destruction. 2. The second enemy is depicted in the thirteenth chapter. A wild beast of hideous composite form—lion, bear, and leopard in one—is seen by the evangelist rising out of the sea. With one slight—very slight—difference his first appearance is that of the dragon himself. There are the seven heads and the ten horns upon one of them, only in this latter case the horns are crowned, not the heads, and therefore

the crowns are ten, not seven. The dragon gives him his power and his throne: he is to represent him: the dragon is a power out of sight: the beast is his impersonation and his "express image." One peculiarity of this foe is a portentous vitality. He receives a mortal wound, but he lives again. The admiration of the beholders rises into adoration. They worship the dragon who gave him his authority, and they worship the beast who lives after dying. The second enemy is the world. There is no mistaking the symbolism. In the interpretation of Daniel's vision the four beasts combined into the beast before us are expressly said to be kings: the beast is the world, as the dragon is the devil. The world, in its aspect of power—the aspect here presented—is a great reality. In St. John's time it was the formidable—apart from revelation the irresistible, invincible—foe of the little Church of Jesus Christ. The time was to be when an apparently fatal wound was to be inflicted upon this antagonist—a wound, of which one illustration, if not the one fulfilment, was to be the nominal conversion of the Roman Empire to the faith which once it persecuted. Surely that wound was a mortal wound? Wait a while and you shall see the world rise from its bed of death—you shall see names changed, realities surviving—you shall see kings ruling in lust and rapine "by the grace of God"—you shall see the nominally Christian world wax wanton in turn against its imaged and sculptured Lord—you shall see Christian kings issuing their edicts of exile against Christian worshippers, and Papal Rome drawing from her scabbard the sword which Pagan Rome had for ever sheathed. The power of the world is superhuman in its vitality: the dragon—this accounts for it—gives the beast his throne and his authority, and that throne and that authority, call themselves what they may, are still adverse and antagonistic to the cause and the people of Jesus Christ.

3. There is a third enemy, called in the text, for the first time, "the false prophet"; but clearly marked, in later passages of the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, as identical with the "beast from the earth" of the thirteenth. His characteristics are peculiar. They combine might and meekness. He has two horns like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon; he unites the seeming innocence of the lamb with the subtlety which beguiled Eve in the serpent. There is no doubt as to his origin—it is more patent than that of the second—he comes up out of the earth whatever his apparent influence with heaven and the unseen. In some sense he is the viceroy of the second enemy; "he exercises all his power before him"—the power which the dragon gave he guides to its destination. His work is to glorify in every way the beast which is the world. He makes earth worship the world. He magnifies, by every art and every persuasion, the miracle of the revival. He props miracle by miracle, can make fire come down from heaven by his incantations to deceive mankind into the idolatry of the beast which died and lives. He bids them make an image of the god-world, and then he puts life into the image and makes it speak. St. John lived in days when the beast was embodied in the empire, and when the image of the emperor was an object of worship. The suspected Christian was bidden for his life to sacrifice to that image. All this would make the figures of this part of the vision very real and very life-like to the Church of that time. Illustrative, not exhaustive, of them. The second beast, like the first—the third enemy, like the second, lives on until now. He is the wisdom, as the other is the power, of this world. He is that subtler, more penetrating influence of policy and diplomacy, of skill and scheming, of expediency and statecraft, of knowledge divorced from religion, of science falsely so called, of reason set against revelation, and creatureship exalted into rivalry with the Creator, without which the brute-force of wealth and numbers, of edicts and penalties, of arms and armies, would have no avail ever against intellect and enlightenment, would have lost it long ago in the face of popular growth and advancing freedom. It must be confessed that it is not easy to set before ourselves in a sharp, strong, telling way the distinctions and contrasts of the three enemies. They interlace and intertwine with each other—their general drift is the same—they are working to one end, and they are helping one another to reach it. Yet we must endeavour to see why they are distinguished, and to discover their special characteristics as influences upon the generation occupying the earth on the very eve of the great day. "I saw three unclean spirits come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." (1) We might hesitate long and anxiously about the first of these. We might think of many characteristics of the evil spirit in his fall and in his ruin, in his reign and in his warfare, as they are suggested to us in the hints and warnings of the Bible. But there is one quality which seems to underlie and motive all, and that is insubordination. It is the

unwillingness to keep the rank and the station—"the first estate," as St. Jude calls it—assigned by the Lord of all to the individual being created. It is the inability to curb and coerce the unruly workings of that pride of self, that lust of liberty, that passion for independence and exemption from jurisdiction, which begins by trying to escape from the omnipresence, and ends by making omnipotence itself its foe.

(2) And what of the inspiration from the "beast" which is the world? To it also we might assign many names, but we shall choose one among them and call it materialism. It is the pressure upon us, the influence over us, of this brute thing, the power of the present, the power of the seen, the power of sense and time, the power of the circumstance and the surrounding of the men that shall die and the world that passeth away; it is the inability to withstand the custom and the fashion, the force of numbers and the cry of voices and the command of the society which can compel or outlaw; it is the influence, in one shape, of clamorous appetite and eager ambition and unsatisfied getting; it is the influence, in another shape, of the meanest and vilest of philosophies, saying, The body is all—let it have its way; or, The body is all—there is no hereafter.

(3) Insubordination—materialism—what shall be the third spirit? Think of the characteristics of the lamb-like, serpent-like wonder-worker—of the ingenious subtle inventor that can draw fire from the sky and make images speak—that can assert itself under another's name, impose its edicts with authority, and ostracise the poor Christian that would so much as buy or sell unmolested—think of all this, and you will not count the third influence misnamed if we call it intellectualism—the thing which struts and parades itself as "thought," intelligence, an open mind, a refusal to see with other's eyes, a repudiation of the received, a passion for the original—though its discoveries are oftentimes the mere echo of an echo from days of obsolete objection, of puerile, infantine bewilderment. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

The battle of that great day of God Almighty.

—*The final conflict*:—Is it possible, after all, that we have mistaken the character of the final triumphs of humanity and Christianity? Are they to be peaceful triumphs? or are they to be gained in the bloodiest grapple of the long-opposing forces which the pen of history ever had or ever shall have to record? 1. In the first place it lies level to the most superficial observation that this, our earth, was chosen of God as the theatre of a great judicial conflict. This world is not a pleasure-garden in God's realm, in which white-footed angels may walk at the cool of day, fearing no thorns or flinty roughness, and inhaling only the fragrance of roses and spices. It is not a place of idle sauntering for any citizens of God's empire, just giving grateful shade, and musical with birds and fountains. It is a rough battlefield on which Good and Evil are met to strive for the mastery. It would not be strange, then, at all if in a world so purposed and elected the conflict should ever be keener; the progress be not more and more pacific, but more and more troubled and stormy; the struggle should ever gather to itself on either side more masterful forces, and the final battle be more resolute and deadly, as it is to be more determinate than any that have gone before.

2. But let us descend for a little from the broad view to details of the engagement, and see how the strife goes in the individual heart—what the law of progress, and what the character of the most decisive victories. Leave out the more spiritual aspects of the conflict for a moment, and come in upon one who is wrestling with some evil habit. Here is a man trying to break away from the bands of intemperance. His first efforts are feeble and ineffectual. He doesn't understand the power of his adversary. All his measures are mild, all his efforts are languid. He tries gentleness and moderation long enough to see that they only play into the hands of the enemy. It begins to dawn upon him that nothing but a terrible final duel can lay his enemy prostrate. Now the grim appetite rises in its strength. The soul, too, seeks to put on power. It thinks of whatever may stimulate its prowess—property wasted, health blasted, name dishonoured, family comfort and peace desolated, life imperilled—and meets the dread hour. It has need of all the heroism it can summon up. It never knew till now what the contest must be, and more than once now, doing its best, it may be worsted. It must yet put forth a more desperate strength. The battle that wins for it deliverance, that breaks the tyrant's sceptre, will be the fiercest battle of all the war. So it is with all the vices—with every evil habit. Is it not thus with the more spiritual struggles for the new spiritual life? The soul begins perhaps by entertaining graver thoughts. That is well, but that doesn't end it. It isn't even the beginning of the end. It reasons with its wild and lawless propensities. The headstrong rioters laugh at such proclamations. They are paper-bullets. It seeks to realise an outward reformation. This is no more than cutting off the outposts

of evil—shooting down a picket or two. It tries exercises, Bible-reading, praying, good-willing; but only to discern more clearly how immovable the heart. The heart is yet securely intrenched. The citadel has not been carried. The soul becomes more in earnest, and the forces waken and multiply on either side—the truth pleads, and conscience and fear and the Holy Ghost and the world pleads—and the flesh and the adversary. This will be another struggle from any that have gone before. It will be a striving unto blood. It will be a grapple for life or death. The soul, if it wins, comes out of it after all pale and spent, with scarce strength to raise the shout of victory. Is not this private and individual strife an epitome of the larger—the public—the universal and comprehensive struggle? Are not the final conflicts ever the most desperate? Is not the fact of hopeful progress declared, not by increasing pacification, but by the growing sternness and fierceness of the contest? 3. When these three combine against God and his people—Sadduceeism, with audacious head; absolutism, with a chained fellow-man beneath its heel; and false religion, binding and loosing human consciences with a lie—then will that last great battle be joined whose fortunes and whose fluctuations will issue in giving the kingdom to the saints of the most High God. There will yet be such a combination. There is yet to rock the perturbed earth the tumult of that battle-day. Evil is not to be quietly dispossessed of its seat in this fair province of God. It holds by immemorial possession. It shall please God to show the full prowess of truth. The mightiest rally of evil in its united strength will be permitted. Gog and Magog will be gathered to the war. The false prophet, the beast, and the old dragon will consolidate their divisions in one dread array. Christianity will advance her banner and sound her charge. Considering what she is called to encounter, considering the long historic past, considering all the prophetic intimations, it will not be strange if she is called to contend against carnal weaponry. That “Armageddon” of the Lord, on which evil, with all its myrmidons, is finally to fall down slain, will be, we believe, not figuratively, but in some part of it, and in the high places of the field, literally an “aceldama.” There will be “the thunder of the captains,” “with confused noise and garments rolled in blood.” (*A. L. Stone.*) Behold, I come as a thief.—*The coming of Christ*:—How comes a thief? He comes secretly and unexpectedly; secretly, lest he be discerned, and then with all advantages of surprisal, that he may not be taken himself while he is taking others. So Christ is said to come to judgment. He comes suddenly and unexpectedly. When people will take no warning He watches the time of their destruction, so that here you have “the goodness and the severity of God” (Rom. xi. 22): first, His goodness is showed in that He will give warning in all dangers; but here is His severity also: when warning will not be taken, then He comes with judgment. Christ here says “He will come as a thief in the night,” and this His coming is by reason of our unfaithfulness. And His coming is sudden, unless to some of His children that He prepares by warning. When He came into the world at His first coming there were but a few “waited for the consolation of Israel” (Luke ii. 25): the rest did not. When He comes to any man or nation in His judgments doth He find faith? No; He finds them blessing themselves that to-morrow shall be as to-day. All that have spiritual life, labour to be waking Christians and then watching Christians. What is the difference between men but that carnal men are sleepers and spiritual men are waking? And what is the difference of Christians that are good and that are not? The one is a watchful Christian and the other not so. Wherein is one better than another? As the one is more careful to avoid sin than another. To come, therefore, to some directions how to carry ourselves, and among others remember this: we should have this waking and watchful consideration that we have a soul immortal, and that we are for eternity; and whatever we do in the flesh that shall be ever with us; and how that shortly we are going to the tribunal seat. In all these respects we should labour to be watchful at all times, because that time in which we take liberty to ourselves may be the time of our surprisal. We should therefore watch at all times, in prosperity and adversity. We should watch against all the sins of our persons and the sins of the state we are in. Besides, if we use this course, we shall bring our souls to that awe as that they shall not dare to offend God, by reason they must come to be examined. And how will our souls be willing to be judged before Christ, when we are unwilling to set ourselves before ourselves? If we use this it will bring a holy awe upon our souls, because they know they must come to examination for every sin. But mark what follows: “Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments close lest he walk naked.” 1. First, know we have

no garments of our own. Now it is thus in spiritual things. We have no garments of our own since the fall; but before we had. We have none now but original corruption that spreads over the soul. Besides that, men living unto years have another nature worse than the leprosy, custom. Here is all the clothing we have of ourselves; but for any spiritual good we must fetch it from Christ (chap. iii. 18). 2. Now the second thing is this, we having none of ourselves, therefore we must have garments; and when we have them we must keep them clean and close: "Blessed is he that keeps his garments close." For the first must be garments for defence; so in spiritual things there must be garments to defend us from the wrath of God, else we lie as naked to God's wrath as a man in a storm being naked lies open to the storm. We must have garments of amity and friendship now. Again, we must have garments for distinction. Now, garments do distinguish Christians at the day of judgment. Garments that are coverings must be all over of equal extent. They cover the whole man. So head, hands, and heart, all must be sanctified as well as justified. So that those that look upon a Christian should see nothing in him but somewhat of Christ, His words, His callings, His thoughts. And we must be clothed not only with garments, but armour, because we live in the midst of our enemies, by which we may perceive the necessity of the putting on of the one as well as the other. Now, as we must have garments and must keep them close, so also we must keep them from stains. The persons where these graces are may be defiled, but the graces are pure. We should, therefore, labour to keep our actions unspotted. The righteousness of Christ is an excellent garment, but it must be put on; and if we have Christ we have all. There is another thing intended in this Scripture. These are dangerous times, and there are spiritual cheaters abroad in the world. Therefore we should keep our profession close, and keep our truth and our judgments close, and get love into our affections; for we shall be set upon, and if we walk at large, then heretics and seducers will come between us and salvation, because our garments are not close. If a man will have any good by religion, he must cleave to religion. "Lest they walk naked, and men see their shame." All shame arises from this, that we do not keep our garments close. So long as truth and Christ by truth have a place in the soul, so long we are safe. Now to give some directions how to keep our garments close. (1) Labour for convincing knowledge, because all grace comes into the soul by the light thereof. Grow, therefore, in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and often propound queries to our judgments about the Word and sacraments. Am I able to maintain this truth I have been brought up in? And do I find them true to my soul, &c. (2) Those that will have good gardens will have flowers of every kind, so a Christian must have graces of every kind. We must put on whole Christ for justification and sanctification, and we must add grace to grace; and when we have put on every grace we must keep them clean, and not defile our profession. (*R. Sibbes.*) *The swift and sudden advent*:—These are words specially for the last days. With eighteen hundred years behind us now, we may take them home most solemnly to ourselves. 1. They warn. 2. They quicken. 3. They rouse. 4. They comfort. I. THE COMING. It is the long-promised advent. Christ comes! He comes—1. As Avenger. 2. As Judge. 3. As King. 4. As Bridegroom. Like lightning; like a thief; like a snare. Like lightning to the world, but the Sun of morning to His Church; like a thief to the world, but like a Bridegroom to the Church; like a snare to the world, but like the cloud of glory to His own. II. THE WATCHING. Not believing, nor hoping, nor waiting merely; but watching—as men do against some event, whether terrible or joyful, of which they know not the time. Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour of His arrival. Watch, for that day is great and glorious. Watch, for ye are naturally disposed to sit down and take your ease. Watch, for Satan tries to lull you asleep. Watch, for the world, with its riches and vanities and pleasures, is trying to throw you off your guard. III. THE KEEPING OF THE GARMENTS. Be like Nehemiah, who, when watching against the Ammonites, did not put off his clothes night nor day. Keep your garments all about you, that when the Lord comes He may find you not naked, but robed and ready. IV. THE BLESSEDNESS. Blessed is the watcher; blessed is the keeper of his garments. Many are the blessed ones; here is one class specially for the last days. 1. It is blessed, for it cherishes our love. 2. It is blessed, for it is one of the ways of maintaining our intercourse. 3. It is blessed, for it is the posture through which He has appointed blessing to come, in His absence, to His waiting Church. V. THE WARNING. Lest ye walk naked, and men see your shame. "Shame" has three meanings. 1. The shameful thing or

object. 2. The feeling of shame produced by the consciousness of the shameful thing. 3. The exposure to shame and scorn from others. The first of these is specially referred to here. But all the three are connected. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The necessity of vigilance*:—I. "BEHOLD!" Here is a business infinitely more momentous than any other that can engage you. II. "I COME." Jesus the Son of Mary—Christ the Son of God. He whose hands were filled with mercies, and whose heart overflowed with love. He comes to see how we have requited His love—what benefit we have derived from His glorious incarnation and His great redemption—what use we have made of His Word, of His Sacraments, of His Church, of His ministers, of His Sabbaths, of His grace. I come, not I will come, but I come—the present tense, I am coming, I am on My way. "Behold, I come as a thief": when all is repose, quietness, confidence, security. Such will, very generally, be the state of that generation of men who are living when the Lord descends at the last day. "Behold, I come as a thief." Most who die, die suddenly. A year before, a month before, they never thought of dying. Many never give a serious thought to death a week before they die, and some not even a day. 1. Watch, while others sleep. 2. Pray, while others trifle. 3. Labour, while others are idle. (*T. Nunns, M.A.*) **Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.**—*Garments—a Scriptural figure*:—It was customary in the temple at Jerusalem for certain of the Levites to keep watch or guard during stated hours of the night. An officer was appointed over them, whose business it was to go round, and see that these watchers were attentive to their duties. He carried a lighted torch in his hand, and, if he found any of the men asleep at their posts, the law permitted him, if it did not require of him, to set fire to their garments. The offender, thus marked, was brought up before the magistrate on the following day, with his garments either wholly consumed or partially scorched, and then received the punishment due to his negligence. Now, see the force of the text: "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." Blessed is the man who so takes heed to his Christian profession in this dark world, where it is necessary he should act as a watchman, because his enemy Satan goeth about to catch him asleep at his post. Blessed is the man who so minds his duties and his Master's interests that no mark of disgrace is put upon him, and that a charge of negligence cannot fairly be brought against him. Blessed is the man who gives such "diligence to make his calling and election sure," that the garments in which he will have to appear, in the light of perfect day, when every man's work will be tried of what sort it is, may not prove his confusion. I. First LET US TAKE THE WORD "GARMENTS" AS USED LITERALLY, AND AS DENOTING ONLY THE CLOTHING OR COVERING WHICH WE WEAR UPON OUR BODIES. The Bible teaches us something about our garments in this plain and literal sense. Many seem to think that religion has nothing to do with the manner in which a love of dress and outward adornment is indulged; that every one is at liberty to choose and act for themselves in this matter. A Christian, however, does not think so. He has learnt that there is a sobriety and suitableness of attire which become godliness; and he makes it his aim to adorn, not himself, but the gospel he professes, even in this particular. II. But LET US NOW TAKE THE WORD "GARMENTS" IN ITS FIGURATIVE SENSE, AND SEE WHAT DOCTRINAL TRUTHS IT IS EMPLOYED TO TEACH. 1. The perishable nature of all earthly things. 2. The sinfulness of our nature, and the worthlessness of our best deeds. 3. Again, the figure contained in the text is used also in the Bible in a more cheering and gracious signification. "Garments of light," are spoken of; "garments of praise"; "white garments"; "holy garments"; "shining garment." These beautifully significant figures were not all of them applied, in the first instance, to sinful creatures like ourselves; yet they truly betoken the state of God's redeemed people at one period or other of their earthly pilgrimage. Collectively, they portray the believer's sanctification. 4. But I must proceed to remark, lastly, that there is a sense given, in the Bible, to the figure in our text, which is especially glorious and worthy of remembrance. "Garments of salvation" are spoken of, beautiful garments, which are something more than mere garments of sanctification, though that is an immense blessing; garments in which the believer may appear before God "with exceeding joy." (*F. W. Naylor, M.A.*) *Watch against old sins*:—Watch against old sins. Sitting on a flowery bank, a viper crawled forth and bit us. Great were the pain and the peril before the wound was healed. Shall we carelessly choose that very bank on which again to rest? Would it be wise to let the pale primrose and the fragrant violet tempt us where deadly reptiles may still make their nest? Let us

watch against the delusion that there is no longer need to watch. After a severe struggle the victory was won over our reigning lusts, and we fancy that the peril is past. But let us watch. The rebellion has been put down; but though its armies have been scattered and its prince dethroned, many traitors lurk in secret places watching for opportunities to renew the struggle. The embankment is weak where it once gave way; and though the breach has been repaired it must be diligently watched. The flames have been put out, but the ashes are still smouldering; and, if the wind rises, the fire may burst forth anew. (*Newman Hall.*) And he gathered them together unto a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.—*The eve of Armageddon*:—The hosts that have mustered behind the Euphrates were once God's handiwork and God's creatures. They have broken loose from that relationship. They have chosen them another leader—himself already emancipated from the yoke of the original blessedness. There is one power, one only, which God does not—shall we say it with reverence? perhaps cannot—exercise: the compulsion of the will—that coercion of the moral being, which some talk of as though it certainly would be applied if God were at once Almighty and all-loving, but which a deeper reflexion feels to be inconsistent alike with the definition of man and with the definition of salvation. Man without free will is man no more—and a salvation imposed by main force would be no salvation. There is a point in the affairs of nations—there is a point even in spiritual history—beyond which war is the one solution. Enmity—even between man and his Maker—may become hostility. As the end draws on, prophets and evangelists concur in anticipating a culmination, if not an incarnation, of evil, only to be dealt with by an intervention of God Himself to decide the long controversy, and to regenerate earth, as a prophet has written, “by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.” The prophetic figure for this catastrophe is that of a war and a battle. God would have the matter fought out. But how strikingly is the distinction here drawn between God's part, and that which is not God's part, in the impending conflict! An angel dries the Euphrates, but no angel stimulates to the crossing. That is the office of the unclean spirits; and they issue from the mouth of the three enemies—the dragon, the wild beast, and the false prophet. “He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” The “gathering” is ascribed, in the 14th verse, to the three spirits. The word is the same here—and the Greek idiom will bear the rendering “they gathered.” But the instinct of our English translators has well guided them to the transition: the parenthesis of ver. 15 has broken the thread. The unclean spirits go forth to gather—“Behold, I come as a thief—Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments”—“And he gathered them together into the place which is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” The spirits of evil do not choose the battle-field: they whisper, and buzz, and irritate—they suggest, and prompt, and incite; but there is a hand and a will above theirs, which leaves not to them the strategy or the combination. “He gathered together,” and He chose the ground. Thus is it in the Old Testament prophecies of the same last encounter. “Thou shalt come up against My people, as a cloud to cover the land: it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee.” Thou shalt come—and I will bring. This is from Ezekiel. “I will gather all nations . . . thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord.” This is from Joel. “The day of the Lord cometh . . . For I will gather all nations to battle . . . Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations.” This is from Zechariah. The spirits go forth, but it is God who “gathers.” He dries the Euphrates, and He fixes the Armageddon. We scarcely recognise, in that name of mystery, the familiar Megiddo—“Ar-mageddon,” “hill of Megiddo”—on the southern skirt of that great plain of Esdraelon which was the scene of so many conflicts, for defeat or victory, in the earlier and later history of Israel. But does any one imagine that we are to seek, on the map of Palestine or of the world, a site or a place for the last great battle? It is well to look into the imagery: it is helpful toward the understanding of the thing signified; it is in the comparison of Scripture type and Scripture parable that we learn what God has written about this consummation of all things. Even in that last suggestion, of the attractiveness to a later enemy of a battle-field fatal to Josiah, we have something to learn as to the fascinations of that lying spirit which alone can make any man a fighter against God. But we are reading of spiritual things: the field of that war is not local—any more than its armour, whether of defence or attack, is carnal. Nay, the place itself is varied in various predictions. St. John points us to the valley of Esdraelon and the hill of Megiddo; Joel makes the place of “decision” the valley of Jehoshaphat; and

Zechariah gathers all nations against Jerusalem, speaks of a siege and capture of Jerusalem, and sets the feet of the Divine Deliverer upon the Mount of Olives before Jerusalem eastward. Such varieties should guard us against all temptations to limit or localise where the matter itself spoken of is not carnal but spiritual. As surely as the vulture scents its prey wheresoever there is death, so surely shall the destroying Angel find out sin, so surely shall delivering Angels find out God's elect, so surely shall there be for every man a day of judgment, for every man a way of salvation: not here, nor there, particularly, shall the war of the end be waged or the battle of decision fought out: Armageddon is a type, not a locality, and the prophecy, like all prophecy, is not letter but spirit. (1) We have before us, then, the two camps, distinct and separate, of the faithful and the foe. It is characteristic of the scene and of the time. A battle is impending, and there can be no battle without a choice of sides. Silently and half unconsciously the two camps are forming: every sinful thing done, every unkind word spoken, every heart-murmuring, every spirit-blasphemy, against the commandment or against the revelation or against the providence of God, is drifting the doer or the speaker or the thinker towards the camp of the foe: every act of good, every earnest effort, every struggle with a sin, every soul's prayer and soul's "feeling after" the invisible, every thought of love to Him who died for us, every longing yearning desire after a heaven of holiness and of service, is tending towards that "camp of the saints" of which a later chapter tells—safe whatever befalls, because God Himself is there. (2) "Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth." The absent Lord speaks—and says, I come. On the eve of the battle—while yet there may be a failing heart needing to be encouraged, or a rebel heart opening itself to conviction—the voice sounds between the two camps—I come. Creep back, rebel heart, to thy allegiance—be strong, coward heart, be strong—behold, I come—come as a thief—and blessed is he that watcheth! And what is "watching"? Is it a restless, hurrying, rushing activity, which counts every moment a sin that is not either excited devotion or bustling charity? Is it the refusal of every comfort and every enjoyment, lest a God who is looking out for our fall should take advantage of us and come because we are resting? Is it the eager calculating of times and seasons, the living much with what Isaiah calls "stargazers and prognosticators," men who can give a name out of this book to each dynasty and each potentate of modern history, and tell precisely at what point we stand on the bank of the stream of time in reference to the advent or the millennium? Is this the life to which Jesus Christ calls us, when He sends that voice, between the two camps, from the excellent glory, "Blessed is he that watcheth"? None of these things. To "watch," in Christ's sense, is to have the heart interested in truth, and the spirit alive to duty—to be able to say, in hours of resting, "I sleep, but my soul waketh"—to listen for the voice of God, even in the night hours, and to be always alert to answer, "Speak, for Thy servant heareth." To "watch," is to keep the heart with all diligence, lest it pollute, at the source, the very stream of the life—to guard against the first rising of sinful thought, ere it form itself into desire or have time to set up an idol—to have the door ever open between the soul and its God, that it may breathe the air of heaven, and weigh all things here with the very shekel of the sanctuary. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Battle of Armageddon*:—Dream not of marching battalions and of mustering squadrons when you hear of Armageddon, dream not of a local battlefield. No; this is no common earthly battle; it is a spiritual battle; a war of principles; of righteousness against unrighteousness; of faith against unbelief; of Christ against Antichrist. This war has been waging ever since St. John received the revelation. In the latter days it will culminate in this one great final conflict—the crisis of the world; the battle of the great day of God Almighty; the great decision between good and evil, sin and God, the world and Christ. The future of the Church used to be described as a shining river flowing full to the promised end, silently widening itself out into a bright tranquil summer sea. How different the predictions of Scripture, of Christ and His apostles. Rather is the future of the Church in their view that of a mighty river sweeping to a great Niagara. The bright tranquil summer sea is beyond, seen afar off, but first there is the terrible precipice; the tranquil sea is only reached through the war of falling, tossed, and troubled waters. I am sure that this is the prediction repeated again and again of Christ and His apostles: "In the last days perilous times shall come"; "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Do not these words most strikingly answer to those of the text? Are not these powers, and signs, and manifestations, and embodiments of "the spirits of devils working miracles, which

go forth " to gather together the hosts of the world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty ; to gather them together to the battlefield of Armageddon ? And by what evil influences will these malignant spirits work their will and delude the world ? It would seem from several passages, as well as the text, that it may be allowed to them to perform the appearance of lying miracles, with what will look like supernatural powers. But in the main these evil spirits will appeal, nay, are appealing, to that which is worst in the hearts of men—to an impatience of moral restraint, to a dislike of pure Christian morality, to the longing after independence, to the rising in the human heart against the childlike teachableness and submission of soul which the Christian faith requires of us, to the desire to have no superior, to be a law unto ourselves, a god to ourselves. And all this is carrying on at this very day, and every day more and more actively ; so actively, so successfully, that we might almost despair of the good cause if we did not remember that two hosts are being gathered to the battle—the host of Christ as well as the host of Antichrist—and that the influence and energies which enlist soldiers for Christ are quite as powerful and more powerful than those which enlist soldiers against Christ. And if the adversaries of Christ were never more numerous, so never were the devoted soldiers of Christ more numerous. And just as in the English army the immediate prospect of war leads men to enlist, so in this spiritual war are Christians keen for the battle, and the growing opposition and the pressing danger only awaken in their hearts an enthusiasm for the cause of Christ which they would not feel in more quiet times. In prospect of the coming battle I will not despair. I address you as soldiers of Christ. I ask of you an enthusiasm for the person of Christ your Lord, a devoted faith and love for Christ. This is what the captain of an earthly host desires of his soldiers : if they have an enthusiasm for him, they will follow him anywhere, they will follow him to the death ; and this enthusiasm Christ asks and is able to inspire. And in your dealings with others, who perhaps seem to be in the opposing army. I do not ask you to contend with them, to argue with them, still less to think evil of them (some of them may yet be standing shoulder to shoulder by your side before the battle is over) ; but I ask you by your life, much more than by your words, to let all see and know that you have a true devotion to Christ, that you love Him with your whole heart. This will draw them to your side—yes, all the truest souls among them ; they all long in their hearts, half unknown to themselves, for such a noble love, for such an inspiring devotion. Let them see in you that such a love, such a devotion, is possible, is real, is all-powerful. And in your dealings with others, remember that the love of Christ is the magic influence which alone controls the human heart. (E. J. Rose, M.A.)

Vers. 17-21. The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air.—*The seventh bowl*.—I. HOW MUCH OF EARTH'S SIN MUST THERE BE FOR GOD TO WITNESS ! II. MEN OFTEN ASK—WHY IS GOD SILENT SO LONG ? III. WHATEVER MAY BE THE TRIAL OF FAITH THUS CAUSED, WE ARE CERTAIN THAT GOD FORGETS NOTHING. IV. GOD HAS GREAT PURPOSES TO ANSWER IN PERMITTING EVIL TO GO SO LONG UNPUNISHED. V. AT THE APPOINTED HOUR THE LONG-SUFFERING WILL CEASE. VI. THEN "BABYLON THE GREAT," WITH ALL HER SINS, SHALL COME UP FOR FINAL RECKONING AND RECOMPENSE. VII. THE FACT THAT ALL IS IN THE HANDS OF GOD IS A GUARANTEE OF PERFECT EQUITY. VIII. WITH OUR GOD THE EXECUTION IS AS CERTAIN AS THE PURPOSE. The seer heard "a great voice from the temple, out of the throne, saying, It is done !" Note—1. Amid the perplexity caused by the prevalence and power of evil, let us stay ourselves on God. 2. Let us do right, and wait God's time. 3. Revenge is never to be any part of our policy. 4. Let us be glad and grateful that believers in God are not left in the dark as to the meaning, aims, and issue of the Divine government of the world. (C. Clemance, D.D.) *Satanic influence*.—The air which has received the last vial may be considered as the home or seat of the devil and his angels. There is no fancy in this, for you may remember how St. Paul himself describes the devil as "the prince of the power of the air." It is, however, of little importance that we determine where fallen angels have their habitation ; and perhaps the associating the devil with the air is not so much for the purpose of defining the residence of Satan as to give us information as to the nature of his dominion. We mean that probably we are not hereby taught that the devil dwells in the air—though that also may be the meaning—but rather that he has at his disposal the power of the air ; so that he can employ this element in his operations on mankind. And we know of no reason why the power of the devil

should be regarded as confined to what we are wont to call spiritual agency, so as never to be employed in the production of physical evil—why the souls and not also the bodies of men should be considered as objects of his attack. Indeed, forasmuch as the soul is the nobler part of man—the more precious and dignified—it would be strange if this alone were exposed to his attack, and the body were altogether exempt. We believe, therefore, that Satan may have a great deal to do with those pains and sicknesses which so abound in the world. It is certainly the representation of Scripture that Satan has much to do with inflicting diseases of the body. The woman who had “a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together”—what said Christ of her, when the ruler of the synagogue was indignant at her being made whole on the Sabbath day? “Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” Again, we know not exactly what that “thorn in the flesh” was from which St. Paul suffered. But the expression makes it seem probable that it was some acute bodily pain, or some oppressive infirmity; and the apostle distinctly calls it “a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him.” Do we not seem warranted in inferring from these intimations that Satan is greatly concerned in bringing maladies on men’s bodies? And if this be once allowed, we may enter into the meaning of the title, “The prince of the power of the air.” We are accustomed, and as it would seem with much accuracy, to refer to certain states of the air as producing certain diseases of the body. Without being able precisely to trace the connection, or investigate the cause, we consider that the atmosphere is frequently impregnated with disease and sickness, so that we may be said to inhale death whilst inhaling what is essential to life. Thus we virtually suppose the “power of the air” to be a power over health and over life; and therefore, that he who possesses that power—and this St. Paul says is the devil—must be one who is greatly instrumental in the inflicting disease. If you add to this that many of the worst calamities, as well as sicknesses with which men are visited, may be traced to the air, you have the materials from which to show that it is assigning to the devil an awful dominion to give him the sovereignty of the air. Again, we remind you that we are fully aware that Satan can do nothing except as he is permitted by God. We speak only of the power which he can wield when the permission has been granted. Never can I hear of a land which is laid waste by plague, and never can I hear of the rushing of the tornado, passing over fertile plains, and leaving them a desert, without the most startling apprehensions of the fearfulness of the enemy who can use this element as his engine, and without also feeling how justly may the final triumph of good over evil be associated with some great deed that shall be wrought in the air, even according to the representation of our text—“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.” We cannot well doubt that this association of the air with the devil is equally appropriate when the devil is regarded under the more common point of view—that of the assailant of the soul, the instigator to sin in all its varieties of form. It may not be so easy to show the appropriateness in this case; for we cannot make much way when we would endeavour to explain what is generally understood by spiritual agency—the operation of spirit on spirit, whether it be for good, or whether it be for evil. There is nothing more mysterious with our present faculties and capacities than those secret influences to which we are undeniably subjected—influences which employ no visible, tangible instrumentality, but whose sphere is at once the inner man, and which make themselves felt, though we know not how they enter into that hidden world, which each bears within himself. We are not, however, concerned with more than the fact, that the spirit of evil, as well as the spirit of good, has access to our minds, and can bring itself into such association and intimacy with us as to act by and through our own thoughts and feelings. Assuming this fact, it is our business to endeavour to show that our spiritual adversary, as the adversary of our souls, may fitly be described as inhabiting the air. In order to this we would remind you, that whatever is visionary and unstable, whatever is a mere delusion and cheat, this we are accustomed to connect with the air; so that we describe as aerial what we find to be unsubstantial or deceptive. It has undoubtedly been through the putting a cheat on man, that the devil, from the first, has effected his destruction. His endeavour has been too often successful! has been to prevail on man to substitute an imaginary good for a real, the creature for the Creator, and to mock their own capacities for happiness by seeking it in the finite and the perishable. If it be by what we should call a series of optical decep-

tions that he acts on our race, distorting one thing and magnifying another, and throwing a false colouring on a third, how is he proceeding but so as to avail himself of those strange properties of the air whence spring such phenomena as that of the Egyptian morass, the weary traveller being cheered with the appearance of the blue waters of a lake, on whose margins green trees are waving, but finding as he approaches that there is only the hot sand and no drop of water wherewith to cool his tongue? If, again, it be by crowding the field of view with witching but unsubstantial forms, with gorgeous thrones and splendid pageants, which sweep before the mind and beckon onward to disappointment—if it be thus that Satan retains, undisputed, his dominion over thousands, what can he be truly said to employ so much as the power of the air, weaving those brilliant phantoms which have seemed to hurry to and fro, as though hurrying from cloud to cloud, and causing those strange delusions which have startled the peasant, and made him think the glens into which he was entering tenanted by shadowy and mysterious beings—in short, if it be that Satan tries to deceive mankind by the inconstant and unsubstantial—if the ambitious, and the voluptuous, and the avaricious, be all and each pursuing a beckoning shadow—if the whole apparatus by which the world is lulled into moral slumber, or roused to self-destruction, be made up of the mere imagery of happiness, could any description be more apposite than one which represents the devil as lord of that element in which floats the meteor, and through which glides the spectre, and out of which can be formed nothing that we can grasp, though it may be the vehicle of a thousand deceptions arrayed in beautiful array? We take this subject of discourse because we desire, by every possible means and by all varieties of illustration, to make you aware of the powers, and put you on your guard against the malice of the devil. We are indeed well aware that it is not the devil who destroys man. It must be man who destroys himself. The devil can do nothing against us, except as we afford him opportunity, yielding ourselves to his suggestions and allowing him to lead us captive at his will. But it may at length come to pass, if we persist in walking as children of disobedience, that we quite expel from our breasts the Spirit of God, whose strivings have been resisted and whose admonitions have been despised, and enthrone in His stead that spirit of evil, whose longing and whose labour it is to make us share his own ruin. And then is there as clear a demoniacal possession as when the man was cast into the fire or water through the fearful energies of the indwelling fiend. Every sin which you wilfully commit helps forward the great design of the devil—the design of obtaining such hold on you that he may claim you as his own; and “as a strong man armed, he keepeth his goods.” Let us look now once more with careful attention to our text and its context. We read in the chapter before us of seven angels, having the seven last plagues, in seven vials, each of which is filled with the wrath of God. These plagues are manifestly those tremendous judgments which are to conclude the present dispensation, and make way for that glorious season when Christianity shall have a home in every land and in every heart. The first six vials are emptied on the earth, or on the waters, or on the sun, and are followed by fearful catastrophes which are preliminary to a more tremendous one which is to close the strange work of vengeance; but it is the seventh vial with which seems associated the final deliverance of the creation—the overthrow of the Lord’s enemies, and the vindication of all His attributes. For, as you learn from our text, so soon as the seventh angel pours out his vial, there is heard a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” as though this were the completion and consummation of a mighty and long-protracted work. Why this triumphant exclamation, “It is done!” as though the emptying of the seventh vial had finished the extirpation of evil, and made a clear scene for the erection of the kingdom of Jesus. Our whole discourse has turned on this—the vial is emptied into the air. We identify the air with the residence and dominion of Satan, and hence the seventh vial may be considered as containing those judgments which are immediately directed against the devil. The destruction of the devil’s sovereignty will be the emancipation of the whole creation which has so long groaned and travailed in pain, hence the shout. Not on the land, not in the sea, not in the fountains is the vial poured; it is poured into the air, and fallen angels, who have their abode in that element which they have long polluted and spoiled, are driven down to their heritage of fire. And then the atmosphere has all the blandness and freshness of a new spring, and the lost flowers of Paradise once more cover the earth. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

CHAPTER XVII.

VERS. 1-6. *The judgment of the great whore.—A corrupt Christianity:—* The description here given of this harlot suggests and illustrates three great evils ever conspicuous in corrupt Christianity. I. *POLITICAL SUBSERVIENCY.* "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication." Essentially Christianity is the absolute queen of life. Although her kingdom is "not of this world," her demand is that the world should bow to her. In yielding to worldly influence she lost her pristine purity and primitive power, she got corrupted, and became more and more the servant of rulers and the instrument of states. II. *WORLDLY PROCLIVITY.* "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold," &c. Genuine Christianity is essentially unworldly. III. *RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE.* "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints," &c. (*David Thomas, D.D.*) *Babylon and Antichrist:—*I. *THE WOMAN.* 1. Her position, which was indicative of power. John saw her seated upon a beast, "dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly"; for so, in the book of Daniel, we find him described. Again, it was a position indicative of hostility to God. For the beast on which the woman sat was "full of names of blasphemy." Then it was a position indicative of the unsightliness of vice. What a hideous monster was this beast, "having seven heads and ten horns"; and how strange was the picture presented to the apostle's view of "the great whore," as seated upon him. Here, too, was a position indicative of cruelty towards men, as well as of hostility towards God. The beast on which she sat was scarlet-coloured, betokening war and bloodshed. It was a position, nevertheless, of allurements and seduction. For she was seen as one who had in her hand "a golden cup," too successfully held forth to "the inhabitants of the earth," who are represented as having been "made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Her position once more was that of a deceiver and destroyer. The cup held forth was "golden." But its contents, as seen by the apostle—what were they? It was "full of abominations," &c. 2. Her attire. "The woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet-coloured," indicative of her real dignity; "and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls"—illustrative of her vast wealth. How many, beholding a female thus adorned, would at once wish to occupy her place! Yet such might be arrayed on earth in purple, and fail of being hereafter arrayed in white in heaven. Instead of wishing to be "decked with gold and precious stones," such as John saw glittering on "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth," let the heart go after that "redemption of the soul" which is "precious, and ceaseth for ever." 3. Her names. (1) "Mystery." Such she would have been to John but for the angel's explanation. Such, even with that explanation, she to a certain extent remained to him. And such she was destined to remain to the Church of God through a long succession of ages. Let it be observed, however, that inquiry into the import of the vision was, as it were, challenged by the angel who showed this "woman" to John. We do not, therefore, act unbecomingly in endeavouring to ascertain what this "woman" was destined to represent to the apostle. (2) "Babylon the Great." In having this name inscribed upon her "forehead," she was exhibited to the apostle in a vaunting attitude, and as under the influence of a spirit, similar to that of Nebuchadnezzar (*Dan. iv. 30*). Elsewhere, too, in this book we find her displaying a boastful and vainglorious temper of mind (*chap. xviii. 7*). This should be a lesson to us not to be high-minded, as the possessors of either worldly or religious distinctions. (3) "The mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth." This was indeed to have "a whore's forehead," and to be, as the Jewish nation was once charged with being, one that "refused to be ashamed." Behold the woman with unblushing effrontery proclaiming to the world her character and misdoings; and see, in her, the foreshowing of those "latter times," in which "doctrines of devils" shall be promulgated, and "men, giving heed to seducing spirits, shall depart from the faith"; times when there shall be a "forbidding to marry." It would seem that in this way Babylon the Great is destined to become "the mother of harlots"—namely, by an authoritative prohibition of the nuptial tie; a doing away with marriage throughout the wide extent of her dominion, and a consequent abandonment of society to general dissoluteness. 4. Her condition. "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints," &c. What a spectacle was this! fitted to awaken in his bosom feelings at once of disgust and horror. How fearful an amount of persecuting rage against the Church of God,

as destined to become apparent in the days of the ascendancy of "Babylon the Great," was thus prophetically indicated to him! And of what an amount of suffering, on the part of the saints, and of the witnesses for Jesus, was he thus made aware beforehand. II. THE BEAST. 1. His colour. A scarlet-coloured beast. What did this indicate? Perhaps, his regal character. We are forewarned that he will be a king of widely-extended rule. In another vision John saw "power given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." "And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." We conclude, then, that in being foreshown to John as a scarlet-coloured beast, the regal character of the Man of sin may have been prophetically indicated, and in particular his character, as vicegerent on earth, of the "great red dragon" (chap. xii. 3). But it is more probable that, in presenting him thus to the view of the apostle, the Divine purpose may have been to foreshow to the Christian world the character of antichrist, as a warrior and persecutor of the Church of God. Such he most certainly will be. As a scarlet-coloured beast he might be very fitly presented to view—a monster dyed, as it were, in blood—when it is considered that the time of his ascendancy will be "a time of trouble such as never was, since there was a nation to that same time" (compare chap. xii. 12; Dan. xii. 1), and "except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved." Power was given to him to make war forty-and-two months"—no longer. Then he was, as foreshown to John, "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

2. His names. "He was full of names of blasphemy," which make us, as they made the apostle, aware that antichrist, when he shall come, besides "wearing out the saints," will "speak great words against the Most High"—"marvellous things against the God of gods." In times long gone he was foreshown to the prophet Daniel as one who would act thus. It will be one special end of his mission, as Satan's prime minister in the world, to blaspheme. 3. His figure. He had "seven heads and ten horns," and must, hence, have presented to the apostle an aspect at once singular, hideous, and terrible—indicative, however, of large intelligence and vast power. 4. His manifestation, contemporaneously with that of "Babylon the Great." Together they will flourish—together they will fall. The day of power to both will be one and the same. The day of doom also. 5. His subservience to her exaltation and advancement. She is seated on him. He "carrieth her." Her prosperity, glory, and dominion will be consequent on, and commensurate with, his own. III. THE APOSTLE'S WONDER AT THE SPECTACLE. "And when I saw her I wondered with great admiration." But John was rebuked on account of the "great admiration" with which he "wondered" at the woman on whom he was looking. He writes, "And the angel said unto me, wherefore didst thou marvel?" What you have now before you is not, in itself, a spectacle that ought to be wondered at, as it now is, by you. And, even if the world will wonder at it, should you do so? "They shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life, from the foundation of the world" (ver. 8). But "wherefore shouldst thou marvel?" IV. THE ANGEL'S PROMISE TO JOHN. "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman." This vision was granted to the apostle for the purpose of instruction, not of mere entertainment. The angel will unfold the mystery to him. The promised revelation, however, of all to him, a holy man of God and a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, is in accordance with what we read elsewhere (Psa. xxv. 14). (H. Edwards.)

The martyrs of Jesus.—*The noble army of martyrs*:—I. WHAT DO THE "MARTYRS OF JESUS" TEACH US ABOUT THEMSELVES? 1. Their heroic faith. They had unswerving reliance in Christ, and knew they were not following cunningly devised fables. These martyrs had not simply an opinion or impression, but a deep belief; they were resting upon evidence which they felt to be sufficient and immovable. They believed in a living, risen, and reigning Lord. 2. Their sublime hope. All they could see seemed to be against them, all their surroundings were calculated to depress them; but they looked not at things seen and temporal, but for an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. 3. Their ardent love. They loved their country, home, and friends; but they loved their Master more, and they were prepared to relinquish all for the love they bore to Him. 4. Their complete obedience. They had their marching orders, and they marched on under the Great Captain of their salvation, to do and dare and die. They reciprocated His love. 5. Their transparent sincerity. 6. Their restful satisfaction. They felt they had not only sufficient, but satisfactory evidence of the truth as it is in Jesus. They found in Him all they needed to satisfy the wishes and wants of

their spirits, so nothing could move them or shake their steadfastness. II. WHAT DO "THE MARTYRS OF JESUS" TEACH US RESPECTING HIM? 1. He could have been no myth. These martyrs were—as the word literally means—witnesses, not inventors, or historians merely, they had the evidence of their senses as well as the experience of their hearts. From what we know of human nature, we feel it would have been impossible for the early Christians to have died for a myth or phantom: they were in a position to test most fully the historic claims of Christ, and to prove His personality and identity at the various points of His mission and ministry. 2. He could not have been a deceiver. Men may submit to be deluded when they have much to gain and nothing to lose; but when it is the reverse they will exercise the utmost vigilance and practise the strictest caution. 3. How faithful Christ was to His promise never to leave nor forsake them, and they witness to the victorious power of His religion to sustain the soul in the most trying circumstances, in torturing pain, and the dying hour. 4. The impotence of error and the omnipotence of truth. Truth is mighty, and must prevail; more is for it than all that can be against it. Error, in its rage and cowardice, has drawn the sword and gone forth to win its way, and strike terror into the hearts of the true. But the prospect of massacre and martyrdom could not deter the true followers of the Lamb: they have gone forth feeling that the Lord of hosts was with them, and that the mighty God of Jacob was their refuge. The King Immortal, Invisible, steers and guards His own ark, and all shall ultimately and utterly fail and fall who lay their unholy alien hands upon it. The noble army of martyrs praise God, and they preach to us. (F. W. Brown.)

Vers. 7-14. I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her.—*A picture of moral error*:—I. ITS HISTORY IS MARVELLOUS. 1. On account of the darkness that enfolds its introduction. 2. On account of the mask under which it works. 3. On account of the wonderful issues that will result from it. II. ITS COURSE IS LAMENTABLE. 1. It rises from the "bottomless pit"—the fathomless abysses of impure lusts, ravenous greed, burning ambition, sensual yearnings, impious irreverences, blasphemous assumptions, &c. 2. It leads to "perdition"—ruin. III. ITS SUPPORTS ARE UNSTABLE. Many of the arguments that have sustained it from time to time have appeared as settled and imposing as mountains, as gorgeous and majestic as kings; but "mountains have fallen and come to nought," and even imperial bulwarks have disappeared as visions of the night. So it has been, so it is, and so it must be to the end. (D. Thomas, D.D.) These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.—*War and conquest*:—I. THE OPPOSING FORCES. Look abroad upon the earth. What a pandemonium of vice and crime, injustice and cruelty, heathenism and superstition it is. Oh, how mighty and multiplied the antagonist hosts! They are mustered and marshalled; they are eager for the strife of the battle, they confront us at every step; and the great question is this, Can they be overcome? Must we lay down our arms in despair! Is the world to become no better? II. THE OPPOSING FORCES VANQUISHED. The Lamb will overcome them. 1. By the interpositions and changes of Providence. God has a purpose, the world is to be converted, and all things are working to accomplish that end; but God's way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters; He is the real, though invisible, ruler, both of matter and of mind. The laws of providence are just as Divine in their appointments and results as the laws of nature. All things work to usher in the day predicted by the angel's song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." 2. By the preaching of His own truth and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Preaching is the appointment of heaven. 3. By the indomitable zeal and energy of His own followers. As the conflict advances, one shall chase a thousand and two shall put ten thousand to flight. In all ages God has carried on His work by the zeal, energy, and courage of His faithful servants. He did it even in the ages of miracles, He will do it till the world is saved; and why shrink from the task His benevolence appoints? Have we had no success? Did not Wesley and Whitfield arouse all England and North America to the worth of the gospel and the importance of eternal things? Are we faithful to the cause of the Lamb? Might He not reproach us for our doubts and fears? Where is the faith which wrought those moral wonders in the apostolic age? (W. S. Edwards.) *The Royal Christ*:—A Lamb, and yet "Lord of lords, and King of kings." The ideas seem incongruous. How, then, is "the Lamb" this? 1. By rightful authority. Though Son of Man, He is also Son of God (cf. Ps. ii.).

2. By virtue of His sacrifice (chap. iv. ; cf. Phil. iii.), "Therefore hath God highly exalted Him, and," &c. 3. By the might of meekness. See how at His nativity the shepherds were told they should see the "Saviour, Christ the Lord." Meekness is might, sacrifice is sovereignty, losing life is gaining it; the cross creates the crown. 4. By the consent of conscience. 5. By the grace He imparted to His people. "Their patient continuance in well-doing put to silence" all their foes. 6. In His people. "They that are with Him." The Revised Version rightly renders St. John's words, "They also shall overcome that are with Him, called, chosen, faithful." St. John does not teach that the Lamb was indebted to them for this victory as a general is indebted to his army. They are—(1) Called. (2) Chosen. But thus we may know if we be chosen: (3) If we be of those who are faithful. Called we are; chosen we may be. If faithful, then we are of the chosen too; and this, and this only, is the proof. (*C. Conway, B.A.*) *The great moral campaign*:—I. THE CONTENDING FORCES. 1. The one is represented as a "beast." Emblem of the mighty aggregate of wrong in all its elements and operations: wrong in theories and in institutions, wrong in sentiments and habits, wrong as imposing as seven mountains and as majestic as kings or empires, wrong sitting as empress over all nations and peoples and tongues. 2. The other is represented as a "Lamb"—emblem of innocence, mildness, and purity. II. THE MARVELLOUS CONQUEST. 1. The conqueror. The Lamb, though not a bellicose existence, is—(1) Invested with the highest authority. (2) Followed by a noble army. 2. The conquered. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The overcoming Lamb*:—I. THE PERSON MENTIONED. He is not a lamb, but *the* Lamb. He is the great universal Lamb, causing the blood which He shed to spread itself, as it were, all over the world, so that every sinner might touch it and be saved from his sins. II. WHAT HE SHALL OVERCOME. All opposers, both nations and individuals. III. HOW HE SHALL OVERCOME HIS OPPOSERS. There are two general methods—1. That of using certain means to persuade rebellious hearts to become reconciled to God. His greatest effort has always been to overcome by the passion of His love. 2. That of final banishment from His presence. Oh, what can feeble man do against such an all-powerful being as Christ is? How utterly vain have been the threats of infidels, that they would banish Him from the world. (*C. H. Wetherbe.*) And they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.—*The army of the Lamb*:—This is a description of the best appointed army that was ever brought into the field—the army of Christ Jesus. It has been the presumptuous boast of many earthly generals that their soldiers were invincible—such as no enemy could overthrow. This may, however, be with truth affirmed of this army. They carry, as it were, this inscription on their banners, "Conquering and to conquer!" I. THE CAPTAIN OF THIS HOST OF THE LORD. The success of every ordinary army depends mainly, under God, upon the skill and valour of its general. But of this spiritual army it may with truth be said that every hope of victory they have arises altogether from Him who leads them to the battle. They have an Almighty leader at their head, One whose presence insures victory to all His followers. In the former part of the verse this "Captain of the Lord's host" is called by two different titles, which seem, at first sight, scarcely reconcilable. 1. One of these titles is, "the Lamb"—a name which might seem, at first, little suited to the leader of an army. But what does the term signify in the case of Him to whom it is applied? Not that He is weak and feeble as the tender animal which bears this name. But He is a "Lamb" in reference to the death He died for His people, when He was "led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep is dumb before its shearers so He opened not His mouth." It is a title, too, of endearment. The Lamb is not more meek and gentle than He is to His faithful followers. 2. But if the epithet "Lamb" represents His gentleness and tenderness towards His people and the death which He has died for them, He has another name which describes, as strikingly, His majesty and power—"Lord of lords and King of kings." II. HIS SOLDIERS. "They that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." 1. They are "called"—just as the soldiers of an earthly army are enlisted for the service. The soldiers of an earthly warfare were called into the ranks they fill from very different occupations: some from the shop, some from the plough. Christ's soldiers, too, were very differently occupied when the call of grace was given them. They were then mere children of the world, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"—each busily occupied in his own favourite and cherished sins. Various, too, were the circumstances under which the call was given to them, and various

the means employed by the great Captain of salvation to make them hear that call. But in every case it was the Saviour's "Follow Me!" which brought His soldiers to His side. 2. They are not "called" only, but "chosen." There is a difference, even in earthly armies, between being called and being chosen, between being merely enlisted and being what is called "picked men," men in whom the general can place his confidence. Look at Gideon's army (Judg. vii. 1-7). Two-and-thirty thousand then were called; three hundred only chosen. It is just thus in the camp of Jesus. What multitudes flock into it! But how many of all these become in after life true soldiers of the Cross? Alas! but a small remnant; for "many are called, but few are chosen." But they that are really with the Saviour, and who constitute His "Church militant here on earth," are, all of them, "picked men." Whatever exploits Christ's soldiers may perform when they have entered on the fight of faith, "by the grace of God they are what they are." 3. They are faithful. The word may be taken in two senses, in each of which it is equally applicable to the armies of the Living God. (1) They are "faithful" inasmuch as they are full of faith and confidence in the Captain of their salvation. The soldiers of the Lamb of God place their entire confidence in the Commander whom they follow. (2) A man is said to be faithful who lives up to his engagements, and who adheres with constancy and perseverance to the person whose service he has undertaken. Faithfulness, in this understanding of the word, is most essential to the character of a good soldier. One part of his faithfulness consists in his remaining true to his commander until he be disbanded or dismissed. To run from his colours, or desert the service of his king and country, is amongst the soldier's greatest crimes. In this point, too, the soldiers of the Lord are faithful. "They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," and nothing shall ever separate them from His love and from His service. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XVIII.

VERS. 1-8. *Babylon the great is fallen.—The overthrow of wickedness:—I. A GLORIOUS ANGEL PROCLAIMS THIS* (cf. ver. 1 as to this angel). Then such overthrow must be—1. Righteous. 2. Blessed. 3. Divine. Had it been possible for men to effect this, it would have been done long since. II. *GOD'S PEOPLE RECEIVE COMMAND.* 1. To separate themselves from sin. From which we learn—(1) That God's people may have to dwell in the midst of sin. (2) That though where wickedness is, they are not to be partakers of it. (3) That they shall one day be effectually separated from it. 2. To avenge themselves upon it. Resentment and wrath are passions given us by God. Our peril and propensity is lest we turn them in a wrong direction. III. *THE FRIENDS OF WICKEDNESS LAMENT.* 1. Wickedness has friends. Those who find delight in it, who "live deliciously" in it (ver. 9). Those who make profit out of it. The merchants, &c. (ver. 11). And—2. Their lament is loud and long. They weep, mourn, wail; say, "Alas, alas!" cast dust on their heads, &c. (vers. 11, 15, 16, 19). 3. But the lament is utterly selfish. They mourn not because of the wickedness: that does not trouble them. Nor even for Babylon's sufferings. But because the hope of their gain is gone (ver. 19). 4. And they do not go to her help (ver. 15). They stand afar off for the fear of her torment. Look well at these friends, for such are they that sin and sinners call friends. IV. *ALL HEAVEN, ANGELS AND SAINTS, REJOICE.* When we read over the subject of their joy, we find that—1. It is not because in this Babylon there was nothing innocent or good. There was much. Vers. 22, 23 tell of what was lawful and right in any community. In the worst of men there is good. None are utterly bad. But—2. That the main characteristic of her life was evil. And therefore her destruction was a matter of joy. She deceived all nations. She slew God's saints. Thus—3. Justice was done. And—4. It was completely done. See the symbol of the angel with the millstone (ver. 21). Nothing like this has ever been accomplished yet, but this prophecy is a sure promise that it will be. "Who shall live when the Lord doeth this"? Amongst whom shall we be found? Let us now "come out of her, that we be not," &c. (ver. 4). (*S. Conway, B.A.*) *Babylon:—*
I. *THE DESCRIPTION OF BABYLON.* 1. Its corrupt character. As before the prophets were "false" and the spirits were "unclean," and stood opposed to God; so now

harlotry, fornication, drunkenness, blasphemy, abominations, luxury, persecuting, violence, sorcery, submission to the beast, warring against the Lamb, are the terms employed to describe or indicate the excessive foulness and corruption of the faithless city. This is "the woman" having in her hand "a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication." This the "Babylon the great," which is become "a habitation of devils, a hold of every unclean spirit and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird." 2. Virulent antagonism to the good, even to the loftiest ideals of goodness. "War against the Lamb"; "blasphemed the God of heaven"; "gather together unto the war of the great day of God"; "poured out the blood of saints and prophets"; in such terms is the antipathy to all righteousness declared. 3. Occasion of all evil, seen in the corruption of life, the deceitfulness of iniquity, the loss of the blessings of righteousness, degradation in sin, to which the "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" are reduced "where the harlot sitteth"; and the judgments and consequent sufferings in which they are involved. 4. The widespread, universal character of the desolation caused. In every aspect this vision is "great and marvellous." It is "Babylon the great." The harlot "sitteth upon many waters," which waters are "peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues." "And the woman is the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth"; "by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen." "What city is like the great city," with whose "sorcery were all nations deceived"? "In her was found the blood of all that have been slain upon the earth." This is the universal kingdom of evil, whose "sins reached unto heaven." This great kingdom shall come to an end. Such is the ever-recurring promise of this book. II. ITS DESTRUCTION IS COMPLETE. The "harlot" is made "desolate and naked"; hated by all over whom she sat as a queen; they shall "eat her flesh, and burn her utterly with fire." "Woe, woe!" is pronounced against the great city, Babylon; "for in one hour is thy judgment come." "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." "In one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God which judgeth her." "The Lamb shall overcome," and thus shall they also overcome that are with Him. "And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all." Then shall the kings of the earth that committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth who were made rich by her, and every shipmaster and mariner, and all that were made rich by her, weep and mourn and lament; while to heaven a sweet song of joy and thankfulness shall rise from them who with the Lamb have overcome—who are called, and chosen, and faithful. (*R. Green.*) *The fall of corrupt society*:—The fall of corrupt society is—I. DIVINELY PROCLAIMED. As there is a law of disintegration in the material universe, that so separates the hugest mountains that they ultimately disappear, so there is in the moral a law of retribution, which will ultimately break into pieces the world of corrupt society. II. MANIFESTLY DESERVED. As in the ruins of old cities, the cormorant, the screech-owl, the vulture, and other hideous creatures are found, so in this moral Babylon are found the most horrible and detestable of all existences. The utter extermination, or rather extinction, of such objects is urgently required. III. A REASON FOR QUITTING IT. 1. The possibility of good men living in this moral Babylon. The depravities of our contemporaries and neighbours are no justification for our defects. 2. Good men, unless they quit this corrupt society, will be involved in its guilt and fate. IV. A DEVELOPMENT OF RETRIBUTION. The ruin comes, not as a casual event, nor as a positive infliction, but as the result of the eternal law of retribution: a law silent in its operation, resistless in its force, and inevitable in its issues (Gal. vi. 7). V. AN OVERWHELMING CATASTROPHE. When full judgment comes upon a corrupt community the horrors involved not only transcend description, but even imagination. What is lost? Friendship gives way to fiendish battlings; peace gives way to furious storms; hope gives way to black despair and terrible apprehensions: liberty gives way to a crushing thralldom, to which every faculty of the soul is bound in chains of darkness. All the lights of the soul are quenched, and the whole heavens are mantled in a starless midnight. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The habitation of devils*.—*The habitation of demons*:—I. EVERY BABEL-LIKE CITY OR SYSTEM IS DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION, AND WILL FALL INTO AN ABYSS OF FEARFUL DEGRADATION. This is the lesson of all history from the beginning of the world. We see it in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms, and of

the Greek and Roman Empires. Wherever we find a nation that is supremely devoted to the things of sense, we have Babel-like adolaters, who are destined to a certain fall and degradation. Such is the appointed end of every political or religious system that ignores God and His truth, and seek after material power and prosperity as the chief objects of life. Let a nation lose her faith in God—let her drive truth, virtue, love, and righteousness from her heart and life, and what will she become? Can she become anything else than a habitation of devils? Can she become anything else but the seat and prey of demon-like passions? II. OBSERVE HOW DIABOLICAL THE PASSIONS OF MEN MAY BECOME. "The most terrible physical calamity that can be imagined," says one, "has no terror to compare with that of fiends let loose from hell and taking possession of human hearts and hands. A ship sinking in a tempest with its hundreds of helpless passengers; a Lisbon overwhelmed by sudden earthquake; a Pompeii buried alive beneath the lava and ashes of Vesuvius are very terrible to hear of, and to think of, but they are nothing to what Paris has lately seen. Her streets have been flooded with the worst passions of which human nature, satanically inspired, is capable. Men, women, and even children, born in the same streets, neighbours all their life long, who have traded and danced and sung together, pursuing each other to death with the ferocity of tigers, and inflicting all manner of dishonour and indignity on the mangled remains of the dead—and all this in the most polished and beautiful city in the world—what can it all mean, except it be an eruption of demons from the bottomless pit?" III. WE SEE WHAT SOCIETY HAS TO EXPECT FROM THE APOSTLES OF INFIDELITY AND ATHEISM. When men have destroyed the idea of a God in their own minds, is it not natural to think that they will enter on a career of destruction in reference to other and smaller things? If they hesitate not to destroy the idea of a God—the fountain of right and wrong—will they shrink from destroying human life or property? If the idea of a God be not a sacred idea to such persons, do you think that the idea of the value of human life or property will be a sacred idea to them? No. Society has everything to lose and nothing to gain from such apostles of atheism and infidelity. Not from them, but from other and higher sources, would we look for the salvation of men. IV. ALL MEN ARE IN DANGER OF FALLING INTO A BABEL-LIKE SPIRIT AND LIFE. For all are only too prone to put faith in the things of sense, and to forget the things that are unseen and eternal. The Babylonian spirit is not dead. Every man to some extent is a little Babel. We have faith in the powers of nature. We have faith in the sun, in the moon, in the star, in the coal, and in the seed that we cast into the ground. Do we believe also in God? Have we a real and lasting faith in Him? Have we such a faith in love, truth, virtue, and righteousness, as in the things that we see with the eye of our body and touch with our hands? (*Wm. M'Kay.*) **Come out of her.**—*The influence of the apostate Babylon*:—When the great apostate power named Babylon comes, as here set forth, to utter destruction, it is seen how wide and how deep its malign influence had been. The whole fabric of the world's commerce is shattered by its fall; for all human industries and traffic and all the markets of the world had come to be diverted from the service of God, and directed and controlled by the corrupt principles and unhallowed delights of the vast apostasy. Even though the identity of this mystic Babylon be left unfixed, the warning reaches us with no lack of distinctness and urgency. We need not wait until we can precisely define and allocate the form and system of wrong which is here denounced before we determine to hold ourselves clear of all wrong, by doing that only which is right, by acknowledging and serving God alone in all particulars and interests of our daily life, at home and in the world. (*G. S. Rowe.*) **In the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.**—*The rule of retribution*:—I. This rule COMMENDS ITSELF TO OUR SENSE OF JUSTICE. That those of the wicked who in this world live in affluence, and have more than heart can wish, possess abundant opportunities for intellectual and moral improvement, and means of doing good, should in future retribution fare alike with those who have none of these blessings or advantages, would be an outrage on our sense of right. Justice requires a balancing of human affairs, a kind of compensation for existing discrepancies, and this mankind will have in the great retributive future. II. This rule ANSWERS TO BIBLICAL TEACHING. Throughout the whole Scripture record it is taught that sinners, after they have passed through their probationary period, will be dealt with according to the mercies they have abused, the opportunities they have neglected, and the advantages they have wasted. "He that knoweth his Master's will and doeth it not," &c. "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah,"

&c. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime didst receive," &c. III. This rule AGREES WITH UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE. Conscious contrast between a propitious past and a distressing present is and must ever be an element in mental suffering. (*Homilist.*) She hath glorified herself.—*The degenerate Church*:—Called to prepare men for the second coming of the Lord, and to teach them to live, not for the present, but the future, she becomes herself the victim of the present. She forgets that, in the absence of the Bridegroom, her days are days of fasting. She fails to realise the fact that until her Lord comes again her state is one of widowhood. And, instead of mourning, she sits as a queen, at ease and satisfied, proud of her pomp and jewellery. (*W. Milligan, D.D.*) Therefore shall her plagues come.—*National ruin*:—Our scientific friends find yellow bricks still impressed with the name of Nebuchadnezzar, and they go back to the sarcophagus of a monarchy buried more than two thousand years ago. But is it possible that that is all that remains of Babylon? a city once five times larger than London and twelve times larger than New York? Wall three hundred and seventy-three feet high and ninety-three feet thick. Twenty-five burnished gates on each side, with streets running clear through to corresponding gates on the other side. Six hundred and twenty-five squares. More pomp and wealth and splendour and sins than could be found in any five modern cities combined. A city of palaces and temples. Great capital of the ages! But one night, while honest citizens were asleep, but all the saloons of saturnalia were in full blast, and at the king's castle they had filled the tankards for the tenth time, and reeling and guffawing and hiccoughing around the state table were the rulers of the land. General Cyrus ordered his besieging army to take shovels and spades, and they diverted the river from its usual channel into another direction, so that the forsaken bed of the river became the path on which the besieging party entered. When the morning dawned the conquerors were inside the city walls. Babylon had fallen. But do nations die? Oh, yes, there is great mortality among monarchies and republics. They are like individuals in the fact that they are born, they have a middle life, they have a decease, they have a cradle and a grave. Some of them are assassinated, some destroyed by their own hand. 1. One evil threatening the destruction of American institutions is the solidifying of the sections against each other. This country cannot exist unless it exists as one body—the national capital, the heart, sending out through all the arteries of communication warmth and life to the very extremities. 2. Another evil threatening the destruction of our American institutions is the low state of public morals. What killed Babylon of my text? What killed Phœnicia? What killed Rome? Their own depravity; and the fraud and the drunkenness, and the immorality which have destroyed other nations will destroy ours, unless a merciful God prevent. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 9-24. The merchants of the earth shall bewail her, and lament for her.—*The fall of the corrupt in human life*:—Wrong, including all that is morally evil in human thought, feeling, and action is constantly falling. Though it has a very slow death, it will by the eternal law of moral disintegration be one day brought down. I. THE LAMENTATION OF THE BAD. 1. The ruling class. True kingdom is the majesty of intellect and goodness. 2. The mercantile class. When the grand altruistic truth of Christian socialism becomes realised by the masses—"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth"—then the every-man-for-himself principle will fall, and with its fall what will become of the enormous possessions which they have obtained merely by working for themselves? II. THE JUBILATION OF THE GOOD. 1. Because the fall is just. Evil has no right to exist. 2. Because the fall is beneficent. It is the uprooting of those thorns and thistles and noxious weeds that have turned the paradise of our being into a howling wilderness. 3. Because the fall is complete. Destroyed once, it is destroyed for ever. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The commercial Babylon*:—1. We should first of all learn that the hold of God on all that we have and are is absolute. We are but tenants-at-will. The proud and conceited talk as if the world were ours—"My river is my own, and I have made it for myself"—is an abomination to the Lord. God has never waived His rights in entrusting to us His loans. Let merchants, stockbrokers, bankers, bondholders, traders learn this lesson. At any moment God may bring all our possessions to nought; and He will do that at His own time, not waiting for ours. 2. It may well yield us matter for lamentation that the use of so much earthly capital is a perverted one. Many of God's gifts are put in alliance

with overreaching, corruption, and fraud. But when things of wealth and beauty become the instruments of apostasy it is sad indeed. 3. Let us learn to look at whatever is beautiful and costly and artistic as precious in the truest sense only as it is allied to or in harmony with righteousness. Beauty and wealth are only of genuine value when employed in accordance with God's will and Word. 4. Let us take care that, so far as we are concerned, we have no share in this heart-apostasy of Babylon the great, even in the commercial world. The voice cries now, "Come out of her, my people" (Isa. xlviii. 20, lii. 11; Jer. i. 8, li. 6, 45; 2 Cor. vi. 14-17). If we would not share her plagues we must not share her sins. There are those who are in Babylon the great, the slaves of godless gain or godless pleasure. There are those who belong to the new and eternal city, the New Jerusalem, who engrave on the bells of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord," and whose daily toil is being sanctified for Him. It may cost something to renounce all fellowship with Babylon. But it is worth infinitely more than it costs. Yea, to be *right* is so transcendently great, that the question of cost should scarce be deemed worth a thought. Better die with Christ than reign with Cæsar. (*S. Conway, B.A.*)

Vers. 13-20. *Souls of men.*—*The manhood traffic*:—I. ONE OF THE CAUSES OF THE RUIN OF THIS BABYLON WAS HER EXTRAVAGANT LUXURY. The history of the world is full of solemn lessons concerning the enervating influence of luxury. It is scarcely too much to say that luxury was the chief destroyer of all the great empires of antiquity. But human nature is very slow to learn this lesson, though it has been written for us again and again in letters of blood and fire; and, in spite of all, we are constantly discovering a proneness to fall away into the ease-taking and self-pampering which ruined the great empires of ancient Babylon, of Media and Persia, of Greece and Rome. Self-indulgence prepares the heart to be the receptacle of all the errors of anti-Christ. Christ-like self-renunciation is a virtue which cannot grow in the soil of luxurious living. The immense sums which are spent in this country in merely tickling the palate with expensive, and often injurious articles of food are simply appalling. A friend recently told me that one gentleman whom he had persuaded to sign the pledge told him that by so doing he had saved him £500 per year. What criminal waste! Yet there are many men in this country whose wine-bill far exceeds this. II. IT IS TO THE TWO LAST ITEMS IN THIS EXTRAORDINARY INVENTORY THAT I WISH TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION, VIZ., SLAVES, AND SOULS OF MEN. As the margin informs us, the literal translation is "bodies and souls of men." In Greek literature the word "bodies" is often used to describe slaves when regarded as articles of merchandise, and that is why our translators have rendered it "slaves." But inasmuch as it is here used in conjunction with the word "souls," it seems to me manifest that the apostle intended to employ it in its proper and ordinary sense, and to declare that the height of Babylon's sin is that she throws manhood, body and soul, into the common heap of merchandise in her market, and that she treats what God has redeemed with the most precious thing in the universe as a mere chattel to be bought and sold for money. 1. I very much fear, thanks to the cruel, heartless, atheistic political economy which this country learnt from Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and company, that very much of our commerce is practically a traffic in the blood, and bones, and nerves, and souls of men. The idea that any relationship between one man and another can ever be reduced to one of cash-payment is to be for ever and utterly denounced. All commerce based upon such an idea carries within itself the germs of ruin and desolation. The only true relations between man and man, be they commercial, or political, or what else, are those which are cemented by love. 2. The drink traffic, the opium traffic, and whoremongering are other manifestations of this awful trade in the bodies and souls of men. Surely it is wrong that adultery which by almost all heathen nations has been treated as a criminal offence should in a Christian nation be regarded as only a civil misdemeanour, and it is a crying abomination that there should not be equal laws for men and women on these matters. Our complicity, however, in this traffic in womanhood is most horrible in relation to our Indian Army. It is awful to think that the name of Christ should be blasphemed among the heathen through the diabolical provision deliberately made by the officials of a Christian nation to ruin poor Hindoo women for the gratification of the lusts of our soldiers. We Christian citizens ought to use all the influence we possess to put the speediest possible end to such shameful wickedness. Then in the matter of opium we are engaged in traffic in the bodies and souls of men. Our relation to the trade in China ought to make every Briton bow down before God in

shame and confusion of face. At this moment we as a nation are manufacturing this drug not in a form prepared for medicinal purposes, but in a form deliberately prepared for vicious indulgence. And what is the plea for all this? Oh! revenue, revenue! We are told that we cannot govern India without money derived from this shameful manhood traffic. Are we Englishmen going for a moment to tolerate this shameless doctrine, "Let us do evil that good may come"? In the name of righteousness, if we cannot govern India without blood-money, let us give up governing it. Whatever comes, we must not commit the crime of destroying men for money. Nay, our work as Christians is not to make merchandise of men but to redeem them, both in their bodies and souls, to redeem them, if need be, by the surrender of ourselves to death. This is the norm of Christian ethics (1 John iii. 16, R.V.). If the Church would do her Master's work she must arise and be the champion of the poor, the enemy of all sweating, the inexorable foe of all manhood traffic. She must minister to the bodies of men, visiting them in prison, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and nursing the sick. She must, above all, care for their souls by doing all in her power to ward them off from vice, and to lead them into a pure, noble, and beautiful life. (*G. A. Bennetts, B.A.*) *Soul merchants* :—In the inventory which is given us of the merchandise of Babylon, the last entry is an item that you would least of all have expected to find mentioned as an article of traffic; and that teaches us with terrible emphasis, how lawless and tyrannous a thing unprincipled commerce is—how it will invade the most spiritual sanctuary of humanity, and lay violent hands upon its sacred things. Having trafficked and made its gain out of everything else, it is here represented as bringing into the market and producing as an article of merchandise the souls of men. And it suggests to us as our appropriate inquiry the way in which modern commerce invades the domain of the spiritual in man; and not only makes its mart in the soul, but brings the soul itself into the mart, and deals with it as an article of merchandise, and estimates it as a thing or capability of profit and loss. Not only does it turn the merchant into a thorough worldling, and quench within him all the yearning energies of his own soul; but it makes of him a trafficker in the souls of others, a soul merchant, unhesitatingly sacrificing the spiritual interests of all around him, if they stand in the way of his bargaining, or impose a limit upon his gain. And we can hardly wonder at this—for if a man be so bent upon gaining the world, as virtually to give for it his own soul, it would be extremely unreasonable to expect that he would be hampered by any scruples about the souls of others. But that we may deal fairly with those whom we have to denounce, we observe—1. That commercial greatness is not in itself a thing of evil or of moral condemnation: and that we are by no means to be understood as sympathising with the ascetic sentiment, that connects the highest forms of piety with abstinence from secular pursuits, and would drive a man out of this world in order to purify him for the next. We are no advocates for "a cloistered piety." A healthy Christianity knows nothing of the pseudo pietism and moral effeminacy that would make a man a hermit, in order to make him a Christian. It is by no means the best way of being kept from moral evil to be taken out of society; on the contrary, it is simply exchanging the perils of social intercourse and activity for the probably greater perils of solitude. Christianity therefore preaches no crusade against so-called secular pursuits; it has no word to say against business activity and commercial prosperity in themselves considered—against the laudable desire to excel in the chosen walk of life, nor against the plying of "the diligent hand that maketh rich." Man's life is a whole, and earth and heaven are but the two great scenes of it; and he alone rightly lives who connects both, whose life on earth is the moral beginning of his life in heaven, and whose life in heaven is the proper moral issue of his life on earth. We best therefore prepare for the future, not by turning aside from the present, that we may deliberately anticipate its coming and adjust ourselves to it, but by earnestly engaging in the present and religiously doing the present work. If these principles be true therefore, there is no necessary evil in commercial pursuits. 2. A great deal of the moral evil of our modern commercial life is not to be attributed to commerce as the necessary cause of it. It springs rather from the common corruption of man's heart, and takes the forms it does, because commerce is the incidental occasion of it. It is just as it is with many other things, the common duties of life are to us as we are to them, spiritual or unspiritual, according to the temper in which we approach and apprehend them; but no man can carry his unsanctified heart into the midst of his business, and then, because he remains without holy feeling, and is guilty, it may be, of unholy doings, attribute it

all to the essential secularity of business. It has a deeper root than this: his business, like affliction, would he but permit it to be so, would be a fine school for his virtue and nurse of his piety; but instead of this, it is the occasion of his bad tempers and the embodiment of his sin. 3. While commerce is in itself a lawful thing, and while much of the moral evil associated with it is to be attributed to the moral condition of human nature, that abuses and corrupts whatever it touches, yet we do in fact often see it overpassing its domain, and encroaching upon the province of the spiritual, and seeking ends and making use of methods that are utterly unholy. Within her own proper limits commerce, as the minister of man's material life, has her proper function always lawful, and possibly religious; but let her once overpass those limits, let her proffer her material good to the spiritual soul of man, or let her, as in the case the text describes, lay hold upon man's spiritual soul itself, and make it drag its chariot, or grind at its mill, or prostitute itself for gain, and commerce becomes an unqualified and unutterable curse; it is guilty of man's crowning sacrilege; it perpetrates his crowning folly. Whatever else may be a thing of traffic, the soul may not; its spiritual affections and inspirations may not be given to material things or for them; its spiritual interests are heavenly and supreme. God claims these exclusively for Himself and for moral good; they are beyond the power of any other man to claim, beyond the power of the man himself to surrender; there is an essential morality and sacredness in the soul that imperatively demands to be preserved inviolate. When I speak of the soul of man, I mean that spiritual part of his complex nature that consists of moral affections and passions, in which the ideas of God and of virtue are implanted, and over which conscience has its proper supremacy; I mean that consciousness of intelligence and of morality which enables him to know the true and to choose the right, to admire the beautiful and to enjoy the good; I mean that consciousness of moral being and relationships, that puts an impassable gulf between man and all other animals, that enables communion with the great and spiritual Father, and that fills us with yearnings for His likeness and love; that consists in a deep and unutterable sympathy, a direct and ineffable intercourse between God and His creatures. And it is into this awful domain that commerce sacrilegiously intrudes; it is upon these mysterious thoughts, and feelings, and aspirations that it lays its irreverent hands; it interposes itself between these spiritual faculties and spiritual things; and it says, "Nay, but ye shall be my servants"; and it makes them its "hewers of wood and drawers of water." As we have said, a sordid and unspiritual commerce invades the soul in two ways—it takes possession of the soul of the merchant, and it constrains him to sacrifice his own spiritual interests to his gain, and it so far infatuates him that he does not hesitate, whenever he can command them, to sacrifice the souls of others. This latter impiety it perpetrates in two ways. 1. It is a traffic in souls, when a service is demanded by employers inconsistent with the principles of moral rectitude. And here we must, I fear, arraign many of the principles and methods of our modern commerce—the adulterations of manufactures, the methods of purchase and sale, the sophistries and subterfuges, the deceptions and concealments needful for efficiency as a shopman. Is not the false article often labelled as the true, the adulterated as the pure. Now, what is all this but trafficking in souls? first, and chiefly, in your own souls. Are you not bartering for a per centage of profit—your moral integrity, your conscience, your godly simplicity and moral sensitiveness, your purity and your peace? If you do not give your whole soul for the whole world, you give part of the one for as much as you can get of the other; you give its virtue and its peace, its prosperity and its purity. If you do not sell it, assuredly you put it in pledge, and can hope to redeem it only by your after repentance and reformation. But the point for our present emphasis is, that you throw into the bargain the souls of those whom you employ. You make these practices the condition of your employment, and bring to bear upon them a coercion that they may not have strength to resist. We talk of the enormity of dealing in the bodies of men; but it is trivial compared with this traffic in men's souls. It is worse than suicide for you to destroy the virtue of your own soul, and worse than murder for you to destroy the virtue of others, "when souls perish more than blood is shed." And yours is the deliberate destruction of these young men's souls; for the sake of your accursed gain you deliberately trample out every spark of conscience, and every struggle of spiritual life. Your merchandise, in its grossest form and directest sense, is the "souls of men." 2. It is a traffic in souls when a service is demanded by employers incompatible with spiritual culture and religious duty. Here, therefore, we most seriously join issue with the present shop-

keeping system in our large towns and cities; the protracted hours of business we hold to be not only a physical and social wrong, but one of the most serious religious evils and obstacles that exist amongst us. One of the most important, if not the most important, classes of society, is our young men; and one of the most vital points for the welfare of the Church, and the conversion of the world, is their efficient religious culture. And they are the victims of this social evil. The great mass of them utterly cut off from all means even of intellectual improvement, save during the jaded hours of their reduced and damaged Sabbath. (*H. Allon, D.D.*)

Alas, alas that great city.—*Is England's greatness on the decline?*—The area of the earth is covered, we may almost say, with the ruins of extinct empires. The empires which have risen upon those ruins have no more inherent right and title to perpetuity than their predecessors had. The *débris* of the grandeur of Rome are around us and beneath us, even as we sit here. If the greatness of Rome collapsed and fell, why not England's? The life of a nation is a wonderful, a most complex, and a most subtle thing. First of all, there is that which is the most obvious and patent of all—its material prosperity, its command of the good things of this life. How high England stands amongst the nations in this respect we all know. There is no question as to her being the wealthiest nation of the world. Now this she might be, and yet the wealth might be so concentrated in a few hands as to add nothing to the welfare and well-being of the nation regarded as a whole. In England, however, at the present moment, this can hardly be said to be the case. The present tendency of things undoubtedly is towards a more equal distribution of the wealth of the community. The general rise of wages has had the effect of diffusing the comforts of life over a much wider area than formerly. And there is nothing as yet to indicate that this tendency has exhausted itself, or is likely in the near future to run in the contrary direction. The words from which we set out suggest a danger of a different kind—a gradual drying-up of the springs of industry through a gradual drying-up of the profits of capital, tending to a transfer of that capital to other countries and other employments. This, however, is still only a possible danger. There is nothing as yet to show that any such dangerous reaction has decisively set in. So far, then, as England's greatness depends upon her material prosperity there is nothing as yet to show that that greatness is on the decline. But then it must never be forgotten that to say this is not saying very much. "With thy wisdom and with thine understanding," writes Ezekiel of Tyre, in language which might be transferred without the alteration of a single letter to the case of England, "thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasuries: by thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches." And what then? Is all this wealth in the prophet's eye any pledge of permanent greatness, any guarantee against the decline of that greatness? On the contrary, the prophet's last word, in God's name, upon Tyre is this: "Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee; it shall devour thee," &c. Upon the whole, then, so far as England's material prosperity—its wealth, in the ordinary sense of the word—is concerned, though there may be cause for anxiety, there seems to be nothing to compel alarm. We may pass, then, now to the discussion of another element of a nation's life, which I may describe as the intellectual element. In the case of England, very little needs to be said about this; and that little has no right to be unhelpful or discouraging. The education of the masses has advanced of late years, and still continues to advance, with giant strides; and, however it may have been or may still in a measure be, it will certainly not be long before England will cease to be liable to the reproach of being backward amongst the nations in the race of intellectual culture. But what about those moral and religious elements which constitute, far above everything else, the vital forces of a nation's life? What about these—these, which are indeed that "soul," by which alone, according to the poet's most true words, "the nations" can be "great and free"? In that passage which I have already quoted from Ezekiel's Book there is a phrase which is not, I fear, without its sting for England now, as for Tyre then: "The iniquity of thy traffick." What the special iniquity of Tyre's traffic was, it is impossible at this distance of time, and indeed it is not for us, to say. But will any Englishman dare to maintain that there is not, nor has been, any iniquity in the traffic of England? For example, is not that word "business" used to cover a multitude of practices which, if carried beyond the circle of trade and commerce, would be at once stigmatised, in plain English, as false, counterfeit, hypocritical? And will it be urged that a lie is less

a lie, and therefore less hurtful and demoralising to him who tells it, if told in the counting-house, or behind the counter, or in the workshop or factory, than if told in the domestic or social circle, or in the common intercourse of daily life? We are discussing, remember, the moral and religious aspects of our English life, with the object of ascertaining whether they indicate the decay of our national greatness, or not. That there are dangerous symptoms no one will deny. We trace them, unmistakably, in things so notorious as the vast dimensions of the liquor traffic—the spread of secularism and unbelief—and a mass of misery and wretchedness, due to improvidence and vice and violation of the sanctities of the home life. But as it is in the natural body, so it is also in the body politic. In both there are forces of decay and dissolution ever at work. And in both there are also forces of life and renovation ever at work until the actual moment of death supervenes. Indeed the life of the natural body has been defined, and very aptly defined, as “the sum of the forces by which we resist death.” When, then, we would forecast the future, and shape an answer to the question, “Is England’s greatness on the decline?” our question really amounts to this, “Which set of forces is at the present moment in the ascendant, those which tend to national decay and dissolution, or those which tend to national life, vigour, and health?” We can only say, “Thou knowest, Lord.” But the difficulty, which is insuperable speculatively, yields at a touch practically. We can, at any rate, one and all, resolve that our lives shall be flung into the scale in which are the forces of national life and strength, and not into the opposite scale. First, by all means cultivate your minds; and not your minds only, but your bodies also. Next, by all means cultivate your citizen-life—your life as members of this great and noble commonwealth of England. Last of all, and above all, cultivate, with the utmost diligence and ardour, your home-life. Do everything that lies in your power for the comfort and welfare and happiness of your wives and children. And into your whole life—as men, as citizens, as husbands and fathers—let me beseech you ever to carry the thought of God, and an earnest desire and a loyal resolve to do His will. (*Canon D. J. Vaughan.*)

Vers. 21-24. **A mighty angel took up a stone.**—*A great millstone*:—Observe here—1. Babylon’s utter destruction represented by the type and sign of a millstone cast into the sea: like a millstone she had ground and oppressed the Church of God; and now, like a millstone thrown into the sea, she sinks into the pit of destruction. Almighty God, by this symbol, signified to St. John that Babylon’s ruin should be violent, irrecoverable, and irreparable; she falls never to rise more. The casting of a stone into the sea was anciently the emblem of everlasting forgetfulness. 2. The amplification of Babylon’s ruin particularised in several instances. (1) That nothing should ever more be found in her that belonged to pleasure or delight; no voice of harpers, musicians, or trumpeters. (2) Nothing which belonged to profit or trading, no artificers and craftsmen. (3) Nothing belonging to food, no noise of a millstone for grinding corn and making provision for bread. (4) Nothing to relieve against the darkness and terror of the night, as the light of a candle. (5) No means for the propagation of mankind by marriage—the voice of the bride and the bridegroom shall be heard no more. All which expressions do imply extreme destruction and utter desolation, intimating that Babylon shall be a place utterly abandoned and forsaken. 3. A threefold cause assigned for all this, to wit—(1) Damnable covetousness: her merchants were the great ones of the earth. Her sinful way of merchandising, by dealing in spiritual commodities, seems here to be pointed at; her making merchandise of the souls of men, as we have it (ver. 13). (2) Her bewitching idolatry, called here sorceries, whereby she enticed people to join with her in her superstitious worship. (3) Her cruelty and bloodshed; in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. But how can the blood shed by others be laid to her charge? 1. Because the doctrines which caused their blood to be shed were with her. 2. Because her jurisdiction gave commission to slay the saints which were slain in other kingdoms. 3. Because by the influence of her example at home much blood had been shed abroad. God will charge upon others, as he did upon Babylon, not only the sin which they have acted, but all the sins which they have been accessory unto. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Moral evil symbolised*:—I. A symbolisation of its NATURE. If you want to see sin, or moral evil, in all its hideous aspects, in all its infernal operations, in all its damning consequences, study the great city of Babylon. The great city Babylon is in every unrenowned soul. II. A

symbolisation of its OVERTHROW. The moral evil of the world is to be destroyed; it is not to exist for ever. 1. It is to be overthrown by superhuman agency. "A mighty angel"; a messenger from heaven. Was not Christ a mighty Messenger sent from heaven for this purpose? Yes, He came to "destroy the works of the devil." It has been said that good alone can overcome evil. True, but it must be good in a supernatural form, and in this form the gospel brings us the good. 2. It is to be overthrown in such a way as never to appear again. Babylon is thrown like a great millstone into the sea. As Pharaoh sank like lead in the mighty waters, and rose no more to life, so shall moral evil, like a "mighty millstone," fall into the fathomless abysses of eternal ruin. (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

VERS. 1-8. *Alleluia; Salvation . . . unto the Lord our God.—The Eternal in the universe, and His representative to man:—*I. A SYMBOLIC ASPECT OF THE ETERNAL IN THE UNIVERSE. He appears here as receiving the highest worship. 1. The worship was widely extensive. Worship is the vital breath and inspiration of all holy intelligences. On the Eternal their eyes are fixed with supreme adoration, and their hearts with intensest love turned in impressive devotion. 2. The worship was supremely deserved. (1) He is absolutely true and righteous in Himself. (2) He is true and righteous in His procedure against the wrong. 3. The worship was intensely enthusiastic. The "Alleluias" seem to wax louder and louder as they are repeated, until they become as "the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings." II. A SYMBOLIC ASPECT OF THE ETERNAL IN HIS REPRESENTATIVE TO MAN. 1. The loving husband of the true. (1) Mutual choice. (2) Mutual sympathy. (3) A mutual aim. 2. The triumphant conqueror of the wrong. (1) The instrumentality He employs, and the titles He inherits. (2) The aspect He wears, and the followers He commands. (3) The course He pursues, and the greatness of His supremacy. (4) The war He wages, and the victories He achieves. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The godly—their work and their praises:—*I. THE CHARACTERISTIC GIVEN OF THE SAINTS. 1. They are a people, the people of God, and grace has made them so. 2. The saints are represented as "much people," a multitude which no man can number. (1) They consist of some of all ages of the world. (2) Some of all nations. (3) They will be found among some of every sect and party. (4) The number of the redeemed includes persons of all ranks and conditions in life, and possessing every variety of talent and disposition; the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the most renowned monarchs, and the most abject slaves. II. THE WORK IN WHICH THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN ARE EMPLOYED. 1. It was "a great voice" which the apostle heard in heaven, and may be so denominated on three accounts. (1) It was exceeding loud, like that which John heard in another vision, as the sound of many waters, or as when seven thunders utter their voices. (2) It was a great voice in regard to the subject or occasion of it, for it related to a great salvation on the one hand, and a great destruction on the other. (3) It was a great voice in reference to the numbers who joined in it, a uniform and melodious voice from all that were round about the throne. 2. The great voice of much people in heaven cried "Hallelujah." This may teach us—(1) That it becomes the people of God to be joyful: praise is comely for the upright, however unseemly it may be in the lips of a deceiver. (2) That our joy must not terminate in ourselves. (3) That our praises must not terminate in any creature like ourselves. (4) Our praises must all centre in God, in the excellences of the Divine nature. III. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED. 1. Observe, after the general shout of "hallelujah," they ascribe "salvation" unto the Lord our God. 2. They ascribe "glory and honour" unto the Lord our God. Glory is the highest degree of honour, and is more immediately appropriated to the Supreme Being, to whom alone the highest praise is due, and who will not give His glory to another. 3. The ascription of "power," as well as honour and glory, makes a part of the song of the redeemed. Power implies ability or strength, and when predicated of the Supreme Being it denotes His almightiness and all-sufficiency, by which He is able to do all things. 4. All this glory is ascribed unto the Lord our God, as what properly belongs to Him. Salvation and glory, and honour and power, are His

exclusively, and in the most eminent degree. IMPROVEMENT. 1. How dreadful is the sin of ingratitude, especially towards our best and only Benefactor. 2. The exultations of the saints in glory may teach us how unseemly are the idle songs and profane mirth of carnal men, and how utterly inconsistent everything of this kind is with the profession of Christianity. 3. The spirit and employment of the redeemed and glorified, may serve as a criterion of true religion, by which we may judge whether we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. 4. A gracious heart would have all that is glorious ascribed to God, and to Him alone; and not only the glory of salvation in general, but of his own salvation in particular. 5. Let mourning saints take comfort, from a view of the blessedness of the spirits of just men made perfect. Those who now hang their harps upon the willows, saying, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" shall shortly have their hearts attuned to joy and praise, when like Judah they return from their captivity. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) Amen; Alleluia.—Amen; Alleluia:—I. We have in these two words (which sum up and condense the whole spirit and tenour of the adoration of the saints in bliss) a marvellous simplicity of perfected intelligence, blending in one eternity of love and infinity of thought. It would not be heaven if either of these words were wanting; it must be heaven where both are felt. For what is Amen? The perfect receiving of every dispensation from God. And what is Alleluia? The perfect giving back of all praise in every dispensation to the bosom of God. Amen is the open breast to receive; Alleluia is the full heart to return the ray: for Amen gathers all, and Alleluia reflects all: Amen sits still and endures; but Alleluia soars away in praise. The one sets to its seal that God is true; but the other encircles the confession with a crown of glory: and the passing and repassing of their crossing rays is heaven. But let us look for a moment at each component part in the whole, which is not to be divided. 1. Amen is nothing else but the ratification of another's will. Thus Christ, being the ratification, in the counsels of the adorable Trinity, of His Father's will, and perfectly performing it, is called the true "Amen." The promises of our redemption in God are said to be "Yea and Amen." God Himself is called in Isaiah the "God of Truth," or (in the original) the "God of Amen." Thus man's truth comes from God's truth. They who desire to say a full Amen in prayer, must thereby understand that they not only ask or appropriate to themselves all that the mouth of the interceding priest or of the petitioner desires; but far more than this; that there may be on all points agreement between their mind and the mind of God; that whether the prayer be granted or denied, they may equally subscribe with the heart, and say "Amen," and desire that all the mind of God, expressed or unexpressed, may be fulfilled in them. This is indeed to say "Amen." And who can estimate the peace of a mind thus at one with God, which should never turn over a leaf of time before subscribing an Amen to the last? Would you gain such a mind? You must recognise the ever-present care of God. You must seek to acquaint yourself with Him whom you seek to obey. You must not only connect the event with God, and God with love; but you must connect God and all events in one great scheme, of which you see only the outline: you must look on to the grand result of all this complicated work: you must live much in the distant future; and there—not in this preparatory scene, but in that grand development—must learn to ponder reverently on the being, the character, the design of God, till you are able to bring back with you to this lower world your firm Amen. 2. Now consider the word "Alleluia." It is one which, in the letter, is found only in this chapter, where it is several times repeated as the native language of heaven. But that it is known too upon earth, David shows: for in all those Psalms which begin "Praise the Lord," the word is "Alleluia"; yet, doubtless, we shall pronounce it as a foreign word, till we have learnt the accents of our home. Still, even upon earth, we can associate and connect it with our nearest approaches to the future bliss. It is when no cloud comes in between to obscure the light of God's countenance; it is when we read Him in His full and overflowing mercy; it is when we kneel in lowly adoration at the altar, and the Lord whom we seek comes to His temple; it is when we most feel, as then, "This God is our God for ever and ever," that Alleluia, unprompted and untaught, is wont to flow. Had we to define Alleluia as it regards God, we should say it is admiration of God, affection to Him, joy in Him. Had we to define it as regards man, we should call it a present bliss, the earnest of a bliss future, and deeper still. II. It is not needful to consider whether of the two is the sweeter sound, the Amen or the Alleluia. Let us not so love the one as to forget the other. Sometimes the thought of past mercies will give us preparation

of heart, and the Amen will grow up out of the Alleluia. Sometimes trial itself will lead us into the experience of such deep and blessed comfort, that our Amen will pass gradually from acquiescence into Eucharist. The more we join the two, the deeper our portion of the Spirit of Christ, the nearer our approach to the worship of redeemed souls. (*J. S. Bartlett, M.A.*) **Praise our God, all ye His servants.**—*Praise to God from all saints*:—Consider what God is; how infinitely above the highest angels; the only Fountain of goodness and life and immortality, and whatsoever is blessed and glorious either in heaven or in earth. Consider again what we are—mortal, sinful, unworthy creatures. Does it not almost seem as if we might well be afraid to praise Him? But Almighty God, by His infinite condescension in Holy Scripture, encourages us not to keep silence. He declares Himself ready to accept our praise and thanksgiving as a sacrifice of a freewill offering. Here in the text we find His approbation yielded, in a very remarkable manner, to the duty and blessing of praising Him, as it has been understood and practised from the beginning by all saints. “A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great.” What voice was that? It was the voice of God, for it came out of the throne; out of the unapproachable glory, where none but God was. It was the voice of the Lamb of God, of Him who is set down in glory on His Father’s right hand, having been slain, and redeemed us to God by His blood. We know it is His voice from the manner in which He speaks: “Praise our God, all ye His servants”; not *your* God only, but *our* God. “I ascend,” He said, “unto My Father and your Father, and unto My God and your God.” In like manner, here at the very end of the New Testament, He speaks from His everlasting throne to the whole Church, now represented as triumphing over her enemies, and makes Himself one, in the work of praising God, with all God’s servants, and all who fear Him, of all sorts and degrees, “both small and great.” “Praise our God, all ye His servants,” says that gracious but awful voice. His servants only are privileged to praise Him; that is, as we should call them, His slaves; those who have given themselves up to Him entirely; who try to have no will but His; who give up what else would please them best when they understand it to be displeasing to Him, and take joyfully affliction, labour, self-denial, when He lays it upon them, and would prepare them thereby for His heavenly kingdom. Nor let any one Christian draw back in indolence or timidity, as if he, for one, had no part in this merciful invitation of our Saviour. Observe with what encouraging words He concludes it: “Praise our God all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great.” Fearing God is the great thing; and they who have that in their hearts, how unequal soever in other respects, may come here with all saints and unite in praising Him. In this place, if nowhere else, all ranks and degrees are equal. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the Tracts for the Times.*) **The voice of a great multitude.**—*Common prayer*:—I wish to speak to you about our Church services. I wish to ask you to help me in making them different from what they now are. There is a coldness and a lifelessness about our services which to my mind is very painful. When we meet together in God’s house we come especially to pray. And if we come to pray, we come to present ourselves before God. The very idea of prayer and of all worship implies at once that we are entering into God’s presence. 1. Now, first, if God is in the midst of us the thought will teach us reverence. 2. And one word about inattention and wandering thoughts before I go on. It is a great grief to many a worshipper, and it comes even to the best. But you are not without a remedy. Besides your prayers for grace to resist these wanderings of eye and thought, I believe the best help will be to use the Prayer-book more, and to keep the eye more fixed on the page. You are less likely to think of other things when you are following the words. 3. But there is another help, which perhaps is more effectual still, that you should take your proper part in the services of the Church. And it is especially of this, the responding aloud, the joining in the common worship of Almighty God, that I wish to speak. In the early days of the Church we read of the worshippers joining so heartily in the prayers that their responses, we are told, sounded like thunder, or like the roar of waters. And still, in our own day, when our missionaries come back to England, they almost invariably speak with pain of the coldness of our English worship. Among their own people, among the converts whom they have gathered round them, there is an intelligent taking part in the services; all responding where the responses are to be made, and all repeating the “Amen” at the end of the prayers. It is to our great loss

that we fail in this. It is a mighty power, that power of sympathy. It helps to keep up our own flagging attention. It helps to increase our own devotions to find that others are praying at our side, following the words, and joining in the service. It moves and quickens the heart to feel that your voice is blending with the voice of others, that your petitions are going up, not singly, but united with other prayers, to the throne of grace. And surely in that stronger enthusiasm there was a sense of God's presence: a real honest belief that He was near to bless, because His blessing was really desired. The real dignity and power of the service of our Church will not be understood till you have learned its congregational character, till you have come to understand how grand is the effect of a great multitude of voices uniting in praise together, or together imploring God's pardon and grace; each encouraging the other, and so each contributing to the noble tribute of worship, which ascends like sweet incense before God's throne from a Christian congregation met together in His name. And in this way, also, you will be approaching nearer to the service of the redeemed in heaven. We read in the Revelation of St. John of the great company of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, standing around the throne. And out of the throne there came forth a voice, calling all that mighty host to praise their God. And we are to do our part in fulfilling the vision of the apostle, when he heard "every creature which is in heaven and on the earth," &c. (*Canon Nevill*.) *Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*—*The hymn of the reign of God:*—This hymn is sung after the destruction of Babylon. They sang with no diffident breast. It was a great voice breaking forth into syllables distinct and strong. They sang of the reign of God. At last the yearned-for result has been attained. "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." I. IT IS THE TRUE INTERPRETATION OF WORLDLINESS. The name of the world is applied in Scripture to two facts—one is transience, the other is godlessness. Because it is passing away we are warned against loving the world: but we are told how transience may degenerate, and the feeling of insecurity infect the whole character, because "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is a natural sequence; for the affection towards the trivial and passing destroys affection towards the great and abiding. It is a contradiction of our nature too; and any such contradiction, any continued violation of a natural law in the moral world, means weakness and disease. What else could come to that great world-city of Babylon? Her delicious living and extravagance, her selfishness and impurity, could find in all the universe but one goal. Nor can it be otherwise. For nations, for cities, and for men, there is the one law unchangeable and irrevocable. The worldly mind, the fleshly, sensuous mind, is decay and death. Selfishness can only destroy self; luxury but ruin comfort, and passion but annihilate pleasure. II. IT TEACHES US THAT FAITH AND HOLINESS ARE NEVER ALONE. It was as the voice of a great multitude—a voice of thunder—a voice of many waters. The young Christian thinks he stands sometimes absolutely by himself. In the counting-house, the school, the shop, he finds none to stand with him. There is not a voice to utter anything in harmony with what his heart most dearly loves. All have gone after their Baal, and the danger is that he rolls himself within his own loneliness, and shrinking back becomes morbid and unhappy. But all the while others, under perhaps the colour of some worldly cant, are longing as he has longed. The same thoughts have filled their minds; the same fears have held their hearts. Had any of them the courage to speak out his own thoughts, had the voice been strong and his heart brave, he would instantly have won companions and friends. III. IT SHOWS US THE NATURE OF TRUE PROGRESS. The first step therein is the marriage of the Lamb. (*W. M. Johnston, M.A.*) *The reign of the Lord a source of consolation:*—I. HE REIGNETH THROUGH THE EXERCISE OF HIS PROVIDENCE. When we speak of the providence of God, we speak of the exercise of His perfections, of His power and wisdom and goodness, co-operating for the direction of the universe. We say that He is everywhere present, and superintends whatever happens here below; that all things are the result, not of unmeaning chance or relentless fate, but of the purpose and pleasure of God. We say that all dispensations, whether great or small, prosperous or adverse, are entirely to be explained on the supposition of the present as an arrangement of things of which we are enjoined to confide in the equity of the end, though neither our diligence nor sagacity can always discover the fairness of the means. We say that He exercises a moral government over His rational creation; that angels and archangels fulfil His pleasure; that the spirits of darkness are under His control, and that we ourselves are, in an especial manner, the

subjects of His administration ; that by Him our very thoughts are observed ; the circumstances of our condition arranged, and watched, as it were, with the vigilance of individual attention. We say, in short, that the world, instead of being a kingdom deprived of its head, abandoned to be the victim of the lawless passions of its inhabitants, and to suffer all the vicissitudes of degradation and advancement, is under the direction of Him to whom not merely its interests are known, but by whom they are also secured. It is interesting to trace the workings of a pious character that has taken much of its form, and that is advancing towards its maturity, under the strong operation of this consolatory truth. Even in the ordinary course of events, when others see things going on only as they did since the beginning of the world, he discerns an Intelligent Reality, silently, but successfully, supporting an infinite charge of dependent beings, and not the less everywhere present, hidden though His glory be beneath the curtains of the material world. Amid the uncertainty of surrounding events, amid the fluctuation of his hopes and fears, he feels that he need not be afraid ; for this Providence, as the Providence of One incomprehensibly excellent in all perfection, has in it every quality which can recommend and endear it—every quality which can brighten even the darkest appearances—everything which tends not only to secure the submission, but also to engage the affections of the heart. He can look upon the present and enjoy the plenitude of the passing moment, because he knows by whom every moment, and all the events of every moment, are dealt out to him ; and upon the faith which he reposes on this Providence is he willing to make the great experiment of futurity—ready to go wherever He will transmit him, satisfied that everywhere, in height and depth, in time and eternity, He will be his portion for ever.

II. HE REIGNETH THROUGH THE MEDIATION OF HIS SON. In appointing the Son to act as mediator between Himself and us, God did ordain certain offices for Him to execute and certain characters for Him to assume ere the purposes of His mediation could be accomplished. He commissioned Him as a teacher to instruct us in the knowledge, and to reveal to us the will of God—to republish that law of nature which the fall had obscured—to dispel those apprehensions of futurity which our ignorance and guilt had engendered. He gave Him up as a sacrifice to make atonement for our guilt as well as to dispel our ignorance. He has established Him as a lawgiver to subdue our stubborn wills, and to bring them into His holy captivity ; to make them obedient in word and deed ; to fashion our lives after the rules He lays down ; and to mould our hearts to the sway which it is given Him to exercise. He has revealed Him as an advocate, as our ever successful intercessor within the veil, pleading for the pardon of our sins, for the supply of our wants, for the strengthening of our faith. And, finally, He has exhibited Him as a model for us to admire, a character for us to resemble, a pattern which we are called upon industriously to copy, that upon the table of our hearts we may inscribe those graces and those affections and those virtues which animated and which distinguished His ; and that, striving to walk even as He did walk, we may, by the zeal with which we seek to imitate Him, and the prayers we put forth that we may imitate Him with success, endeavour to be in all our conversation and in all our practice the images and the representatives of what He was during all the days of His earthly manifestation. And from this view of the mediation of Jesus Christ, slight and superficial though it be, it must be evident that the government which the Divine Being doth maintain by means of it, is a government which is adapted to all the varieties of its subjects. What are all the means of grace which we receive—what are they but just so many ways in which this government takes effect ? What is the removal of our ignorance—what is the forgiveness of our sins—what is the subjection of our rebellious wills, and the improvement of our own characters in excellence and perfection—what are those spiritual changes when they are effected and brought about upon us, but each a separate field in which its influence has been displayed ?

III. HE REIGNETH THROUGH THE MEANS OF GRACE AND THE ORDINANCES OF HIS APPOINTMENT. It is true, indeed, that God might reveal all the essential truths of the gospel by a direct and immediate process to any man—that inward devotion might be excited and expressed without the agency of outward acts—that did it but seem good in His sight He could produce the change which is necessary to be produced upon our hearts and affections without the intervention of means. But though this might be the case, and sometimes is the case, we have no warrant for expecting that it ever will be the case. Such a mode of procedure forms no part of His ordinary providence. We have no ground for anticipating that His

saving impressions will descend upon us, except in the use and through the channels of the appointed means of grace. Now if we reflect on the object which those ordinances have directly in view, on the preparation which is necessary for their right observance, and upon that spiritual good which they actually do produce, in respect both of the instruction they communicate and the impression which they make in the case of all who sincerely observe them, we may have some conception of that reign or influence which, through these means, the Almighty doth exercise. IV. HE REIGNETH THROUGH THE AGENCY OF AFFLICTION. (*John Paul.*)

Divine Providence:—I. THE WIDE EXTENT OF JEHOVAH'S GOVERNMENT. 1. With respect to holy and happy angels in heaven. 2. Over the powers of darkness—restraining their malignity, bounding their furious rage, and turning all their stratagems into artillery against themselves. 3. Over the children of men on earth.

II. THE ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES OF HIS PROVIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS MANKIND IN GENERAL, AND TO HIS OWN RENEWED ADOPTED CHILDREN IN PARTICULAR. The word "providence" suggests two ideas intimately connected together, namely, preservation and government. 1. In His dispensations our God acts as an independent sovereign, carrying into certain accomplishment the purposes He has formed, and fulfilling them in His own way and at His own time. 2. Another property of the Divine administration is its perfect rectitude and purity: "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." 3. The dispensations of Providence in this world are all subservient to the enlargement of the glorious Redeemer's kingdom in the world. Lessons: 1. Doth the Lord God Omnipotent reign? and are you the subjects of His providential kingdom? Then be it your care to think,

and speak, and act, as becomes His creatures; as the dependent pensioners on His bounty, and as the dutiful subjects of His administration. 2. While praising the Lord God omnipotent for all the comforts of life you hitherto have enjoyed, entrust also to Him all your future interests; for He justly claims the right of imparting mercies in His own time and manner. 3. Is there a kingdom of grace on earth, as well as a kingdom of providence? Then be it your highest concern to know if you are the real subjects of this spiritual kingdom. (*A. Bonar.*)

The marriage of the Lamb is come.—*The marriage of the Lamb*:—I. THE ANTECEDENTS OF THIS MARRIAGE. What will happen before the public marriage is celebrated? 1. One great event will be the destruction of the harlot church.

Everything which sets up itself in opposition to the sacrifice of Christ is to be hurled down, and made to sink like a millstone in the flood. 2. Furthermore, in the immediate connection, we note that before the marriage of the Lamb there was a peculiar voice. Read the fifth verse: "And a voice came." Where from? "A voice came out of the throne." The Mediator, God-and-man in one person, was on the throne as a Lamb, and He announced the day of His own marriage. Who should do it but He? 3. The voice from the throne is a very remarkable one; for it shows how near akin the exalted Christ is to His people. He saith to all the redeemed, "Praise our God, all ye His servants." In that glory He still owns His dear relationship, and in the midst of the Church He singeth praise unto God (Heb. ii. 11, 12).

4. Next notice the response to this voice; for this also precedes the marriage. No sooner did that one august voice summon them to praise, than immediately "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude." He heard the mingled sound as of an innumerable host all joining in the song; for the redeemed of the Lord are not a few. 5. Observe that this tremendous volume of sound will be full of rejoicing and of devout homage. "Let us be glad and rejoice," &c. II. THE MARRIAGE ITSELF. 1. The marriage of the Lamb is the result of the eternal gift of the Father. Our Lord says, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." 2. Next: this is the completion of the betrothal which took place with each of them in time. I shall not attempt elaborate distinctions; but as far as you and I were concerned, the Lord Jesus betrothed each one of us to Himself in righteousness, when first we believed on Him. Then He took us to be His, and gave Himself to be ours, so that we could sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." This was the essence of the marriage. 3. The marriage day indicates the perfecting of the body of the Church. The Church is not perfected as yet. We read of that part of it which is in heaven, that "they without us should not be made perfect." 4. I cannot tell you all it means, but certainly this marriage signifies that all who have believed in Him shall then enter into a bliss which shall never end; a bliss which no fear approacheth, or doubt becloudeth. III. THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH THE BRIDEGROOM APPEARS IS THAT OF THE LAMB. "The marriage of the Lamb is come."

1. It must be so, because our Saviour was the Lamb in the eternal covenant; when

this whole matter was planned, arranged, and settled by the foresight and decree of eternity. 2. It was next as the Lamb that He loved us and proved His love. He did not give us words of love merely when He came from heaven to earth; but He proceeded to deeds of truest affection. The supreme proof of His love was that He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. 3. Love in marriage must be on both sides, and it is as the Lamb that we first came to love Him. I had no love to Christ, how could I have, till I saw His wounds and blood? This is the great heart-winning doctrine. Christ loves us as the Lamb, and we love Him as the Lamb. 4. Further, marriage is the most perfect union. Surely, it is as the Lamb that Jesus is most closely joined to His people. Our Lord came very close to us when He took our nature, for thus He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. 5. We never feel so one with Jesus as when we see Him as the Lamb. IV. THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE BRIDE: "His wife hath made herself ready." Up till now the Church has always been spoken of as His bride, now she is "His wife"—that is a deeper, dearer, more-matured word than "bride": "His wife hath made herself ready." The Church has now come to the fullness of her joy, and has taken possession of her status and dower as "His wife." What does it mean—"hath made herself ready"? 1. It signifies, first, that she willingly and of her own accord comes to her Lord, to be His, and to be with Him for ever. This she does with all her heart: "she hath made herself ready." She does not enter into this engagement with reluctance. 2. Does it not mean that she has put away from herself all evil, and all connection with the corruptions of the harlot church has been destroyed? She has struggled against error, she has fought against infidelity, and both have been put down by her holy watchfulness and earnest testimony; and so she is ready for her Lord. 3. Does it not also mean that in the great day of the consummation the Church will be one? Alas, for the divisions among us! 4. Notice what the preparation was. It is described in the eighth verse: "To her was granted." I will go no further. Whatever preparation it was that she made, in whatever apparel she was arrayed, it was granted to her. When we shall be united to Jesus, the ever blessed Lamb, in endless wedlock, all our fitness to be there will be ours by free grant. Look at the apparel of the wife, "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." How simple her raiment! Only fine linen, clean and white! The more simple our worship, the better. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The bride of Christ*:—I. THE CHURCH'S FINAL BLESSEDNESS IS FOUND IN AN INDISSOLUBLE UNION WITH CHRIST. II. FOR THIS THE CHURCH IS PREPARED BY SANCTITY AND FIDELITY. III. THE ULTIMATE BLESSEDNESS OF THE SAINTS IS THE OCCASION OF JOY TO ALL. "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (R. Green.) *The righteousness of saints*.—*Saintly ideals*:—A very slight acquaintance with the lives of those who may most truly be called saints will satisfy us that they are not all cast in one mould. On the contrary, they are characterised by an almost infinite variety, diversity, and even contrariety of form. But beneath all this contrariety, diversity, and variety, there may be traced a fundamental unity, a substantial identity. Features and form are endlessly different; the spirit is one. I do not speak now of the mere surroundings and outward circumstances of a life. Riches and poverty, solitude and society, sickness and health, all may be said to come alike to it; inasmuch as it is independent of all, and can turn all to good account. We may represent human life, the life of each one of us, to ourselves, as a series of concentric circles, circle within circle, all having the same centre, and that centre being the "I," the soul, the spirit, the will, the very substance of our human personality, call it by what name we will. What we describe as the "circumstances" of our lives will be represented by the outermost of these concentric circles. But we may pass inwards from one to another on our way to the centre of all, and still find endless variety and diversity, and yet the saintly life still. Thus we will take what is certainly much nearer to the centre than the circle already described, which was that of outward circumstance and surrounding. We will take the circle of ritual and worship, which, you will all agree, touches the soul much more nearly than the outward form or fashion of our lives does or can do. Let our thoughts range back over the history of this our own beloved place of worship. What changes and varieties of ritual has it not witnessed in the course of the many centuries that have elapsed between its first conversion from a pagan temple into a Christian Church, and the present moment! Each generation in turn has worshipped here after its own fashion, now with Roman splendour, and now with Puritan simplicity. Better the coldest, barest, ugliest ritual, with spiritual edification, than the costliest

and most beautiful and most ornate, without. We pass yet again within—nearer and nearest to the innermost circle and centre of all. We take the circle of religious opinion, of doctrine and dogma; which is indeed the very vesture of the soul. For our intellectual beliefs, our modes of thought upon religious questions—what are they but the garment, as it were, and most immediate environment of the soul; an environment, which acts upon the soul, and upon which the soul reacts, at once moulding and moulded? The saintly life, therefore, cannot but be deeply affected by this intellectual environment; and, according to the nature of that environment, accordingly, to a great extent, will that life be conceived of and lived. Yet, even in this nearest circle of all, it is astonishing to note the amount of possible variety and diversity that is consistent with that fundamental unity and substantial identity of which we have still to speak. To stereotype thought is to kill it; to stereotype religious thought is to destroy its fructifying, generating, or regenerating power. The word of God, if it is to be spoken with power, must be spoken under the influences, and according to the intellectual, as well as the moral and spiritual, necessities of the day in which it is spoken. To borrow our modes of thought and speech from the repertory of a past generation however excellent, or from teachers however devout and learned in their day, is to be, at the best, but as a scribe half instructed unto the kingdom of God. For our Saviour said: "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." We pass through all these circles, which, even to the last, are still external, to that innermost circle which is the centre of all. What is that inner fundamental unity, that substantial identity, of which we are in search, and which constitutes the veritable communion of saints; the true, everlasting bond of fellowship between God's elect, past, present, and to come, here and hereafter? The answer is not far to seek: but an example will be better than any definition. "I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing His whole will": such is the dying confession of Brainerd. "Wish always, and pray, that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee": so writes the devout à Kempis. And we might multiply such statements from the lips and pens of the saints of one generation after another, almost without number—whatever their intellectual creed, and what men call their "Denomination." But why spend time on the testimony of those, who are, after all, but the satellites of the Sun of Righteousness? Listen to the language of Him, who is the King of Saints, the faithful and true Witness: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." Saints we already are—we all of us are—in name, by title and profession, according to the Scripture meaning of the word "saints," that is, persons consecrated or dedicated to God. Saints we are by title; but woe to us, if we rest content with being mere titular saints! To the outward consecration must be added the inward sanctification, which converts the name into a reality; the righteousness of saints—the saintly life. We see now very clearly in what that life or righteousness consists; that it consists, above everything else, in devotion to the will of God, in the reconciliation of our wills to His holy and blessed Will, alike in action and in suffering, in joy and in sorrow. Here is the root of the matter. And this root has such marvellous virtue in it, that it will grow and flourish and bear fruit in any soil of circumstance, of ritual, of religious opinion. But if it is to do this it must be cultivated with all diligence, by watching, by striving, by praying—by incessant struggles against the snares and temptations and enticements of the world, the flesh, and the devil—by repeated efforts after self-mastery and self-renunciation—in a word, by earnest imitation of Christ in the power of the Spirit of Christ. (Canon D. J. Vaughan.)

Ver. 9. Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.—*The marriage supper of the Lamb*:—I. THE LAMB. We know at once who this is; but it is remarkable that, with one exception and that occurring in this evangelist's own Gospel, this is the only part of the inspired writings in which our Lord is ever called by this name. Now this could not have happened by accident. There is a meaning in it, and it is not difficult perhaps to see what it is—the Lord Jesus would have us look up to Him in heaven as the same Jesus who died for us on the Cross. II. THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB. Here, you observe, is a complete change of metaphor. Our Lord puts off the character of

a Lamb, and takes on Him that of a Bridegroom; or rather He takes this character on Him without putting off the other. 1. A long looked for and much desired hour. The Saviour Himself desires it. It is the hour that will bring Him the consummation of all His wishes, the full reward of all His labour and sufferings. And His Church desires it. Scarcely had He disappeared, when its language was, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." 2. An hour of great love and affection. No earthly affection is equal to that of a redeemed sinner for his Saviour. There may not at times seem much warmth in it, but when it is real there is as much strength and depth in it perhaps as man's nature, in its present state and circumstances, is capable of. But still it is an imperfect love, very much broken in upon by the love of other things, and damped by the cares of life, its business and troubles. It is an unseen object too that we love, and we find it difficult to realise anything we have never seen. And even in our best moments, we often feel as though we only half loved our Lord. We long for a better and higher nature, that we may love Him more. At this marriage supper we shall have what we long for. We shall see our Lord, and see Him in a form in which we shall know Him; and shall have souls within us, that will for the first time feel large enough to love Him, and these souls shall be filled to overflowing with admiration of and delight in Him. The love of this hour will be the perfection of love. This marriage feast will be the feast, the triumph of love—the exalted Saviour showing to the whole universe that He loves us to the utmost bound love can go, and we loving Him with a fervour, a gratitude, an adoration, a delight, that are new even in heaven. 3. A scene of abounding joy. The affection that reigns in it would of itself make it so. "Let me only be with my Lord," the Christian says, "and I ask no more. That, without anything else, will make me happy, and happy to the full." The heavenly Bridegroom provides for His guests all that can gratify and delight them, and all too that can show His love for them and His munificence. The provisions made by Him for our enjoyment, will astonish us. So will it be with us in heaven. We shall find it a feast and a monarch's feast. III. THOSE INVITED OR CALLED TO IT. 1. They are those who have been invited before to this supper. And here we are all included. 2. They are those only who have before accepted the invitation to it. 3. These guests are yet further distinguished—they are ready and prepared for this supper. A worldly-minded, ungodly man in heaven, would be a miserable man in heaven. A prepared place for a prepared people, a holy place for a holy people—this is the heaven of the Bible. IV. THE HAPPINESS OF THESE MEN. "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." It is not an invitation to every feast that will make a man happy. Not a snare or a danger can await them there. Not a single being will they see there who can do them harm or whom they would wish away. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The marriage supper of the Lamb*:—I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 1. As the Lamb He is the one everlasting sacrifice for sin: He will not be other than this in His glory. 2. As the Lamb, suffering for sin, He is specially glorious in the eyes of the angels and all other holy intelligences; and so in His joyous day He wears that character. 3. As the Lamb He most fully displayed His love to His Church; and so He appears in this form on the day of His love's triumph. 4. As the Lamb He is best loved of our souls. Behold, how He loved us even to the death! II. THE MEANING OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER. 1. The completion and perfection of the Church. "His bride hath made herself ready." 2. The rising of the Church into the nearest and happiest communion with Christ in His glory. "The marriage of the Lamb is come." The espousals lead up to this. 3. The fulfilment of the long expectations of both. 4. The open publication of the great fact of mutual love and union. 5. The overflowing of mutual delight and joy. "Be glad and rejoice." 6. The grandest display of magnificent munificence in a banquet. 7. The commencement of an eternally unbroken rest. "He shall rest in His love." The Church, like Ruth, shall find rest in the house of her Husband. III. THE PERSONS WHO ARE CALLED TO IT. 1. Those who are so called as to accept the invitation. 2. Those who now possess the faith which is the token of admission. 3. Those who love Bridegroom and bride. 4. Those who have on the wedding garment of sanctification. 5. Those who watch with lamps burning. IV. THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH IS ASCRIBED TO THEM. 1. They have a prospect which blesses them even now. 2. They have great honour in being called to such a future. 3. They will be blessed indeed when at that feast, for—Those who are called will be admitted. Those who are admitted will be

married. Those who are married to Jesus will be endlessly happy. How many a marriage leads to misery! but it is not so in this case. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "*The marriage supper of the Lamb*":—A distinction seems to be drawn between "the marriage," and "the marriage supper" of the Lamb. "The marriage," takes place now,—"*The marriage supper*" is to follow by and by. "The marriage" is that act of union between each soul and Christ, when that soul, drawn by God's love and made willing by His grace, is linked to, and made one with, the mystical body of Christ. "The marriage supper" will be the public celebration, and the glorious consummation, of that union. Therefore there are differences. "The marriage" here, blessed and beautiful as it is, has its trouble and its separation. The soul has to leave, not without pain, what once was very dear to it. And some fear cannot help to mingle, even where love prevails. But at "the marriage supper" it will be all union, and no parting; and there will be no room for the shadow of a fear there. "The marriage" here is an individual act. One by one, each as God chooses, one here, and another there, a soul gives itself to Christ. "The marriage supper" will be the solemnity of the whole Church's collective partnership, one and another, with Jesus. "The marriage" here, at least so it seems, sometimes, to the poor Christian's heart, was capable of being dissolved again. But when "the marriage supper" comes, who will ever think of breaking the tie? In "the marriage" here, real and perfect though it be, there are intervals of distance; seasons, when there is no union between the soul and Him it loves. But in "the marriage supper," the felt and visible presence of Christ will be for ever and for ever. In "the marriage" here there were many who, though truly and indissolubly joined to Christ, yet often seemed to others, and seemed to themselves, not to be His. But at "the marriage supper" there will be no misunderstandings. Christ will have proclaimed His own; and the whole universe will confess Him, and His saints. (*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*) And he saith unto me, *These are the true sayings of God.—The Scriptures divinely true.*—I. A RIGHT ESTIMATE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. 1. These words which we find in the Old and New Testaments are true. Free from error, certain, enduring, infallible. 2. These are Divine words. Infallibly inspired, so as to be in very truth "the sayings of God." 3. These words are thus true and Divine in opposition to words of man. These may or may not be true. Pretended words of God. False prophets and men with addled intellects profess to speak in the name of God; but they lie. 4. These words are all of them truly Divine. Neither too severe to be true, nor too terrible to be uttered by a God of love, as some dare to say. Nor too good to be true, as tremblers fear. Nor too old to be true, as novelty-hunters affirm. Nor too simple to be truly Divine, as the worldly-wise insinuate. 5. These words are a blessing to us for that reason. What else can guide us if we have no sure revelation from God? How can we understand the revelation if it is not all true? II. THE RESULT OF FORMING SUCH AN ESTIMATE. If you believe that "these are the true sayings of God"—1. You will listen to them with attention, and judge what you hear from preachers by this infallible standard. 2. You will receive these words with assurance. This will produce confidence of understanding. This will produce rest of heart. 3. You will submit with reverence to these words, obey their precepts, believe their teachings, and value their prophecies. 4. You will expect fulfilment of Divine promises under difficulties. 5. You will cling to revealed truth with pertinacity. 6. You will proclaim it with boldness. III. OUR JUSTIFICATION FOR FORMING SUCH AN ESTIMATE. 1. The Scriptures are what they profess to be—the word of God. 2. There is a singular majesty and power in them; and we see this when the truth of God is preached. 3. There is a marvellous omniscience in Scripture, which is perceived by us when it unveils our inmost souls. 4. They have proven themselves true to us. They warned us of the bitter fruit of sin, and we have tasted it. They told us of the evil of the heart, and we have seen it. They told us of the peace-giving power of the blood, and we have proved it by faith in Jesus. They told us of the purifying energy of Divine grace: we are already instances of it, and desire to be more so. They assured us of the efficacy of prayer, and it is true. They assured us of the upholding power of faith in God, and by faith we have been upheld in trial. They assured us of the faithfulness of God to His people as shown in providence, and we have experienced it. All things have worked together for our good hitherto. 5. The witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts confirms our faith in Holy Scripture. We believe, and are saved from sin by believing. Those words must

be truly Divine which have wrought in us such gracious results. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Worship God.**—*The Supreme Being the only proper object of religious worship*:—I. THE SCRIPTURE REPRESENTS GOD AS THE ONLY PROPER OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP. II. THE ABSOLUTE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN ALL HIS GREAT AND ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES. 1. God is supreme in respect to His existence. 2. God infinitely surpasses all other beings in the immensity of His presence. 3. God far transcends all other beings in His knowledge. 4. God is absolutely supreme in wisdom. 5. God is supreme in power. 6. God is supremely excellent in His holiness, goodness, or benevolence. III. IT IS ABSURD TO PAY RELIGIOUS WORSHIP TO ANY BEING WHO IS NOT POSSESSED OF THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINITY. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) **The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**—*The great prophetic burden*:—I. THE THEME OR BURDEN OF THE BIBLE IS JESUS. Not philosophy, nor science, nor theology, nor metaphysics, nor morality, but Jesus. II. THE THEME OF BIBLE-ANNALS IS JESUS. Not mere history, but history as containing Jesus. Not the mere rise and fall of nations and kingdoms, but these as connected with the promised seed of the woman. III. THE THEME OF THE PSALMS IS JESUS. It is not mere poetry, Hebrew poetry, that we find in them, but Jesus. It is poetry embodying Jesus; it is praise, of which every note is Immanuel. IV. THE THEME OF PROPHECY IS JESUS. It is not certain future events, dark or bright, presented to the view of the curious and speculative; it is Jesus; earthly events and hopes and fears only as linked with Him. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The one witness and the one testimony* (with Rev. xxii. 20):—I. THE ONENESS OF THE TESTIFIER. He is the one God. The sender of the testimony is the one Jehovah; the subject of the testimony is the one Jesus; the inspirer is the one Spirit. Through many lips He has spoken, by many pens He has written; but it is the mind, the will, the purpose, the revelation of the one God that is here. II. THE ONENESS OF THE MESSENGER. It is intimated here that it was one angel alone that was employed to communicate the testimony. He was sent to patriarchs and prophets of old, to apostles and brethren in later times. The instrument or medium of communication was a created being, an angel; but it was the same throughout. III. THE ONENESS OF THE TESTIMONY. It is not many testimonies, but one; it is the word (not words) of God. It was given at sundry times and divers manners; in fragments and portions, great and small; yet there is unity throughout, not discord or contradiction—marvellous unity, which can only be accounted for on the fact that there was in reality but one writer, He to whom one day is as a thousand years, and that therefore the truths enunciated are the offspring of one mind, the thoughts of one heart. This testimony bore all upon one point, one person, one work, one kingdom. It was the “testimony of Jesus,” that is, it testified of Him from first to last; for Christ is the all and in all of prophecy, the all and in all of the Bible. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 11–16. **A white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True.**—*The rider on the white horse and the armies with Him*:—I. JOHN SAW OUR CAPTAIN, the King of kings. 1. Let us notice His glorious state. Our Lord is here described as sitting upon a gallant steed, charging His foes upon a snow-white horse. (1) This means that Christ is honoured now. In royal state our Jesus goeth forth to war, not as a common soldier, but as a glorious prince, royally mounted. (2) By a horse is denoted not only honour, but power. To the Jews the employment of the horse in warfare was unusual, so that when it was used by their adversaries they imputed to it great force. Jesus Christ has a mighty power to-day, a power which none can measure. (3) Here is symbolised swiftness, too. His word runneth very swiftly. The colour of the horse is also meant to denote victory. He comes to fight, but the fight is for peace; He comes as a conqueror, but it is as a delivering conqueror who scattereth flowers and roses where he rides, breaking only the oppressor, but blessing the citizens whom he emancipates. 2. John looked into the open vault of heaven, and he had time not only to see the horse, but to mark the character of Him that sat upon it. He says that He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. By this you may know your Lord. 3. John still looked, and as he gazed with open eye he marked the mode of action and of warfare which the champion employed, for he says, “In righteousness He doth judge and make war.” Jesus is the only king who always wars in this fashion. 4. One other thing John saw, and that was His name. But here he seems to contradict himself. He says that He had a name which no man knoweth, yet he says that His name was the Word of God. Oh, but it is all true, for in such a one as our Master there must be paradoxes. No man knoweth His name. None of you know all His nature. His

love passes your knowledge; His goodness, His majesty, His humiliation, His glory, all these transcend your ken. You cannot know Him. Oh, the depths! II. His FOLLOWERS. 1: Christ has a great following—not one army, but “armies,” whole hosts of them, numbers that cannot be counted. 2. These that follow Him, you notice, are all mounted. They followed Him on white horses. They are mounted on the same sort of horses as Himself, for they fare as He fares: when He walks, they must walk; when He bears a cross, they must carry crosses too; but if ever He gets a crown, He cries, “They shall be crowned too.” 3. The armies of Christ followed Him on white horses. Look steadily at these white horses, and observe the armour of their riders. Cromwell’s men wore at their side long iron scabbards in which they carried swords, which oftentimes they wiped across the manes of their horses when they were red with blood. But if you look at these troops there is not a sword amongst them. They are not armed with lance or pike, and yet they are riding forth to war. Do you want to know the armour of that war? I will tell you. They are clothed in white linen, white and clean. Strange battle array this! And yet this is how they conquer, and how you must conquer too. This is both armour and weapon. Holiness is our sword and our shield. 4. Yet I have said they were all on horses, which shows you that the saints of God have a strength that they sometimes forget. You know not that you ride on a horse, O child of God; but there is a supreme invisible power which helps you in contending for Christ and for His truth. You are mightier than you know of, and you are riding more swiftly to the battle and more rapidly over the heads of your foes than ever you dream. III. THE WARFARE. What is this warfare? There cannot be war without a sword, yet if you look all along the ranks of the white-robed armies there is not a sword amongst them all. Who carries the sword? There is one who bears it for them all. It is He, the King, who comes to marshal us. He bears a sword. But where? It is in His mouth! Yet this is the only sword my Lord and Master wields. Mahomet subdued men with the scimitar, but Christ subdues men with the gospel. We have but to tell out the glad tidings of the love of God, for this is the sword of Christ with which He smites the nations. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) On His head were many crowns.—*The Saviour’s many crowns*:—I. First, let every believing heart rejoice while it sees the many crowns of dominion upon His head. First and foremost there sparkles about His brow the everlasting diadem of the King of Heaven. His empire is higher than the highest heaven, and deeper than the lowest hell. This earth also is a province of His wide domains. Though small the empire compared with others, yet from this world hath He perhaps derived more glory than from any other part of His dominions. He reigns on earth. On His head is the crown of creation. “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” His voice said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. It was His strength that piled the mountains, and His wisdom balances the clouds. Together with this crown of creation there is yet another, the crown of providence, for He sustaineth all things by the word of His power. Let Him once withdraw His hands, and the pillars of earth must tremble; the stars must fall like fig leaves from the tree, and all things must be quenched in the blackness of annihilation. On His head is the crown of providence. And next to this there glitters also the thrice-glorious crown of grace. He is the King of grace; He gives, or He withholds. The river of God’s mercy flows from underneath His throne; He sits as Sovereign in the dispensation of mercy. He reigneth in His Church amidst willing spirits; and He reigns for His Church over all the nations of the world, that He may gather unto Himself a people that no man can number who shall bow before the sceptre of His love. Methinks I hear one say, “If this be so, if Christ hath these many crowns of dominion, how vain it is for me to rebel against Him.” Believer, look to Christ’s thrice-crowned head and be comforted. Is providence against thee? Correct thy speech; thou hast erred; God hath not become thine enemy. Providence is not against thee, for Jesus is its King; He weighs its trials and counts its storms. Thy enemies may strive, but they shall not prevail against thee; He shall smite them upon the cheek-bone. Art thou passing through the fire? The fire is Christ’s dominion. Art thou going through the floods? They shall not drown thee, for even the floods obey the voice of the Omnipotent Messiah. Wherever thou art called thou canst not go where Jesu’s love reigns not. Commit thyself into His hands. II. Christ hath many crowns of victory. The first diadems which I have mentioned are His by right. He is God’s only begotten and well-beloved Son, and hence He inherits unlimited dominions. But viewed as the Son of Man, conquest has made Him great, and His own right hand and His holy

arm have won for Him the triumph. In the first place, Christ has a crown which I pray that every one of you may wear. He has a crown of victory over the world. For thus saith He Himself, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." I would that we could imitate Christ in our battle with the world. But alas, the world oftentimes gets the upper hand of us. Sometimes we yield to its smiles, and often do we tremble before its frowns. Have hope and courage, believer; be like your Master, be the world's foe and overcome it, yield not, suffer it never to entrap your watchful feet. Stand upright amid all its pressure, and be not moved by all its enchantments. Christ did this, and therefore around His head is that right royal crown of victory, trophy of triumph over the entire forces of the world. Furthermore, the next crown He wears is the crown by which He has overcome sin. He has cast down every shape and form of evil, and now for ever stands He more than a conqueror through His glorious sufferings. Oh, how bright that crown which He deserves who hath for ever put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And then again, Christ wears about His head the crown of death. He died, and in that dreadful hour He overcame death, rifled the sepulchre, hewed death in pieces, and destroyed the arch-destroyer. Glorious is that victory! Angels repeat the triumphant strain, His redeemed take up the song; and you, ye blood-bought sons of Adam, praise Him too, for He hath overcome all the evil of hell itself. And yet, once again, another crown hath Christ, and that is the crown of victory over man. Would to God that He wore a crown for each of you. Say, has His love been too much for you? Have you been compelled to give up your sins, wooed by His love Divine? Have your eyes been made to run with tears at the thought of His affection for you and of your own ingratitude? If this be the case with you, then you may yourself recognise one of the many crowns that are on His head. III. THE CROWNS OF THANKSGIVING. Surely concerning these we may well say, "On His head are many crowns." In the first place, all the mighty doers in Christ's Church ascribe their crown to Him. Not a martyr wears his crown; they all take their blood-red crowns, and then they place them on His brow—the fire crown, the rack crown, there I see them all glitter. For it was His love that helped them to endure; it was by His blood that they overcame. And then think of another list of crowns. They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. What crowns shall theirs be when they come before God, when the souls they have saved shall enter paradise with them. What shouts of acclamation, what honours, what rewards shall then be given to the winners of souls! What will they do with their crowns? Why, they will take them from their heads and lay them there where sits the Lamb in the midst of the throne. But see, another host approaches. I see a company of cherubic spirits flying upwards to Christ, and who are these? The reply is, "We lived on earth for sixty, or seventy, or eighty years, until we tottered into our graves from very weakness; when we died there was no marrow in our bones, our hair had grown grey, and we were crisp and dry with age." "How came ye here?" They reply, "After many years of strife with the world, of trials and of troubles, we entered heaven at last." "And ye have crowns, I see." "Yes," they say, "but we intend not to wear them." "Whither are ye going, then?" "We are going to yonder throne, for our crowns have been surely given us by grace, for nothing but grace could have helped us to weather the storm so many, many years." I see the grave and reverend sires pass one by one before the throne, and there they lay their crowns at His blessed feet, and then, shouting with the infant throng, they cry, "Salvation unto Him," &c. And then I see following behind them another class. And who are ye? Their answer is, "We are the chief of sinners saved by grace." And here they come—Saul of Tarsus, and Manasseh, and Rahab, and many of the same class. And how came ye here? They reply, "We have had much forgiven, we were grievous sinners, but the love of Christ reclaimed us, the blood of Christ washed us; and whiter than snow are we, though once we were black as hell." And whither are ye going? They reply, "We are going to cast our crowns at His feet, and 'Crown Him Lord of all.'" (*Ibid.*) *Many crowns*:—I. ON HIS HEAD IS THE CROWN OF CONQUEST OF SIN. This is the victory. II. ON HIS HEAD IS THE CROWN OF THE CONQUEST OF SORROW. That reigned supreme. III. ON HIS HEAD IS THE CROWN OF THE CONQUEST OF SUFFERING. IV. ON HIS HEAD IS THE CROWN OF THE CONQUEST OF SATAN. No light conquest! V. ON HIS HEAD IS THE CROWN OF THE CONQUEST OF DEATH. (*W. M. Statham, M.A.*) *The royalty of the glorified Redeemer*:—I. THE GLORY OF THE GREAT REDEEMER. 1. His essential majesty. 2. The grandeur and the equal diversity of His peculiar functions. There is no work so glorious, no prerogative so high, that it is not

specifically ascribed to Him in the pages of inspiration. 3. The greatness of those obstacles He is represented to have overcome in the fulfilment of His exalted undertakings. 4. The completeness of His victories in themselves. 5. His resulting satisfaction and the fulness of His joy. 6. The same almighty power which displayed itself so illustriously in His personal conquests was, even in the earliest age, exhibited in the progress of His cause, and the preservation of His followers, in spite of the most aggravated injuries and most threatening dangers. 7. We must now turn, somewhat more directly, to the spiritual consequences of redemption, whence the real value of that recompense the Saviour has attained for all His privations, humiliation, and sorrow. They are of every kind. His victories are those of pity and of wrath, of indignation and of tenderness, of insulted majesty avenging its own wrongs, and of mercy rejoicing against justice. They spread over every department of the Divine administration, extend to every diversity of power which menaces, or of impurity which would pollute, or of sorrow which would darken and afflict, diffusing their happy consequences through an unlimited territory and a never-ending duration. II. THOSE OBVIOUS PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

THE SUBJECT SO FORCIBLY SUGGESTS. 1. Let its contemplation teach us the sentiments we should habitually cherish respecting the power and glory of the Saviour. 2. Let us cultivate those associations which belong to His supremacy, for we cannot too highly exalt Him. Let us see, in all that is fair and good amidst the scenes that encompass us, the skill of His workmanship—the beauty of His image. Let the convulsions of empire and the vicissitudes of time instruct us to confide in that eternal presidency over the affairs of men, by which the ends of His redemption shall be finally secured. (*R. S. McAll, LL.D.*) *The supreme kingship of Christ:—*

The supreme kingship of Jesus Christ as Mediator is manifestly the theme of our text. The ruling principle in the mediatorial empire is benevolence. The final purpose of the mediatorial empire is the highest possible good of man. This Jesus is able to accomplish by reason of His infinite attributes of wisdom and of power. I. Let us look, then, at the MATERIAL UNIVERSE. There are many kings in matter. The sun is the king of day; the moon is the queen of night. The planet, with its attendant satellites, exercises a kingly rule over them. Gravitation, subtle and invisible, yet permeating all things, and influencing all things in sea, air, and land, exercises a kind of kingly rule over everything within the range of its influence. Just as the British Empire has its colonies and dependencies in Africa, Australia, and America; each possessing its own governor and its own mode of government; each independent in its place, yet dependent upon the parent power; each supreme in its own locality, subject nevertheless to the higher supremacy of the Queen: so is it in this material creation. It is divided into miniature kingdoms, petty empires, and in each kingdom there is a king. Look at the bee-hive. There is congregated under that straw cone an empire. All the elements of a kingdom are found there. A queen rules within. Authority and subjection, rule and submission may be found under that covering. The same thing is true of the ant-hill. The naturalist assures us that order and harmony prevail in what appears to us confused chaos. There a kingly rule is recognised, submission to supreme authority is observed, and in these you have the elements of an empire. Lifting your eyes from the earth around you to the heaven above you, we are told that those heavens are divided into districts and groups of worlds, that in each group there is one system exercising a kingly rule over the rest. Far above all these petty kingdoms and minute empires is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He moulded every atom. He brightened every star. He fashioned every system. He appointed to each its boundary. He created all forces and originated all laws. From Him all things proceed. To Him all things tend. For Him all things exist. And around Him all things revolve. He is King of kings and Lord of lords in the material world. The disciples of a sceptical science have endeavoured to extort from nature evidence against her King. The geologist has dived into the depths of the earth, hoping to discover some strange hieroglyphics on the rocks of nature which would bear testimony against the King of nature. The astronomer has soared into heaven, and tried to get the very stars in their courses to fight against Him who made them. In fact, nature has been twisted and torn and disembowelled in order to obtain evidence against her Lord. Faithful to her mission, she moves on for the accomplishment of the great purposes for which her King has made her; so that, whether by her regular movement, or the occasional suspension of her laws, as in the case of miracles, she asserts the kingship of her Lord, and proves her obedience to her Master. This world materially considered is eminently fitted for Christ as

Mediator. We can only conceive of three kinds of worlds. One in which there shall be nothing but purity, and consequently nothing but happiness; such is heaven. The second, a world in which there shall be nothing but sin, and consequently nothing but misery; such is hell. The third, a world in which there shall be an admixture of the two, good and evil, right and wrong; such is the world we occupy. This world, take it geologically, is not fitted for anything else than a mediatorial world. It is not fitted, as to its material construction, to be a heaven, a world of unsullied purity, and, consequently, a world of unmixed happiness. Lightnings and storms ruthlessly pursue their destructive and desolating course; the volcano belches forth its destructive lava, which carries desolation to cities and villages and fruitful plains. These things could not exist in a world of unsullied happiness and purity. We find the elements of ruin and destruction in the very material of which the world is constructed, and it is not fitted on that account to be a heaven. It is not fitted, on the other hand, to be a world of retribution and of unmixed evil. The sun shines here. The valleys smile with luxuriance here. Thrilling sensations of pleasure are experienced here. Scenes of loveliness spread themselves before the vision here. There is no sunshine in hell; no beautiful scenes are there; no sweet harmony there: but they do exist here. Why have we this admixture of destructive and benevolent forces stored up in the secret places of nature? These elements are necessary in order that the earth may be a fitting theatre for Jesus Christ to carry out His mediatorial purposes. He must have elements to appeal to man's fears, and He finds them in the destructive forces of nature. He must have elements to appeal to man's hopes, and He finds them in the benevolent forces of nature. The component parts of earth were adjusted, put together, with a view to redeeming purposes. All the elements of nature, all its laws, and all its forces have been made for Christ as Mediator, and are placed under His immediate control. He is King of kings and Lord of lords in the material world. II. In the MENTAL WORLD Jesus Christ is King of kings. Earth has her crowned kings, monarchs surrounded with symbols of royalty; the crown, the sceptre, and the throne. The extent of their dominions varies, as does also the amount of power they wield. Some are despotic, arbitrary, and absolute; others are mild and paternal in their rule. Some are the mere tools of parties, and retain nothing akin to kingship but the symbol. While some of them happily and trustfully acknowledge the supremacy of Christ, there are others who recognise no authority higher than their own, and no power superior to their own. Nations are organised and held together, scattered or established on the one principle of subserviency to the empire of Christ. The ruling powers of earth exist for Him. Willingly or unwillingly they are His servants. Consciously or unconsciously they are carrying out His purposes. When they cease to be His instruments He often removes them, and brings others in their place. "By Me princes rule," "by Me kings reign and princes decree justice." Sceptics sneeringly say, "Your Christianity has been in the world for eighteen hundred years, and this surely is time enough for it to subdue the world. The fact that it has failed to meet with universal acceptance throughout all the ages is proof enough that it is not the Divine religion you profess it to be." Our reply is, God feels no hurry. When man strongly desires to accomplish an object he often exercises haste. He is liable to so many contingencies. Unforeseen circumstances may arise to check his progress and to defeat his purpose. But God exercises no haste, nor doubts the issue. Eternity is before Him; endless ages are waiting for Him. But there are also uncrowned kings—men who never wore a crown, perhaps never saw one; but who, nevertheless, are the true kings of society, who possess minds of kingly proportions and imperial mould, who influence and move and control minds inferior to their own. There have been the founders of false religions, the originators of errors, like Buddha, Mahomet, Sabellius, Arius; and nearer our own times men like Tom Paine, Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume; and men of our own day like Strauss and Renan. These men possess kingly intellects, and wield a kingly power over many other intellects. They have set themselves up against the kingly rule of Christ. They have inspired millions with their errors. The battle they have waged with the King of Truth is fierce and desperate. It has been going on for ages. But this we know, Jesus is unchanging and immortal. His enemies in succession die and pass away, but He never dies. Let the kings of the earth, crowned and uncrowned, social rulers and mental rulers, set themselves against God's anointed; let them join in an unhallowed conspiracy, and associate with them the whole mass of infernal powers, and rise up in rebellion against the kingly rule of Christ, all that

they can do is but the menace of a puny worm against One whose frown is perdition. "The Lamb shall overcome them." A reverent universe will then bow at the feet of His victorious Majesty, and creation shall become vocal with the song, "The kingdoms of this world" have "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." III. Jesus Christ is supreme in the MORAL WORLD. Men are everywhere actuated by principles, passions, purposes, motives existing within them. These inward forces are in possession of the mastery; they exercise kingship. In the language of the Scriptures, they reign, they have dominion. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." The lust of power, the lust of money, the lust of pleasure, the lust of pride, the lust of envy, are the imperial powers which control men, bringing them into vile and degrading bondage, and hurrying them into wrong doing. Evil, when thus dominant, exercises a crushing sway over its victim. Some of you have been conscious of this. Some base passion has mastered you. And after a short conflict you had to beat a retreat and own yourself again mastered. But why? Because you faced the foe in your strength. Sin has but one master, one king, the Lord Jesus Christ. He destroys the works of the devil, and it is through Him strengthening you that you can be made victorious. However mighty evil may be when enthroned in the human heart, Jesus is mightier far. He is stronger than the strong man armed. Christ while yet on earth confronted and mastered moral evil under a variety of forms and circumstances. Look at Him again at the grave of Lazarus. He saw in that grave evidence of the triumph of moral evil—a proof that sin had obtained kingship over human life, and reversed the destiny of man from life to death. His tears were shed over sin and its sad results as witnessed in that sepulchre. His contest was not with death but with moral evil. But there are moral laws as well as moral forces in the world. We will just mention one or two as an illustration. One law is this: that hardness is the inevitable result of resistance. Just as the anvil becomes hardened by every stroke of the hammer, the heart of man is hardened by every resistance it offers to the Divine Word and Divine Spirit. This is not an arrangement. It is a law in God's moral empire, and this law explains to me what otherwise seems to be paradoxical in the history of Pharaoh. The penalty of hardness was inflicted by God, that is, by an inevitable law which He appointed; and in this sense it may be said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But, on the other hand, Pharaoh did the wrong, the penalty of which is hardness. God neither compelled nor disposed him to resist. God is responsible for the law which inflicts hardness as the penalty of resistance; but Pharaoh alone is responsible for setting that law at defiance, and thereby incurring the penalty of hardness. Another great law in the mediatorial government of Jesus is that sin is its own punishment. Where there is wrong-doing there must be suffering. That is God's law. And so we understand the declaration, "Tophet is ordained of old; the breath of the Lord doth kindle it." God affixed suffering as the penalty of wrong-doing. But the wrong-doer alone is responsible for bringing himself under the dominion of that law. God has made it a law that fire should burn. If I foolishly thrust my hand into the flame I become a sufferer under the dominion of that law. God is responsible for the law; but who is responsible for my suffering? Certainly not God, but myself alone. Why does not retribution fall at once on transgressors? It is because the Mediator reigns. He is above law, superior to law. He restrains the action of the law of retribution. He holds back the penalty. But what right has Jesus Christ to interfere with the law and to delay retribution? This right is not based on His absolute sovereignty, but on His atonement. The kingly title of the Lord Jesus is written on His vesture. What kind of a vesture is it? It is not a kingly robe, but a priestly one. He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. His kingship is based on sacrifice. But this restraint will only be exercised for a time. Probation being over, the impenitent will be given up to the law of retribution. IV. In the SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE Jesus Christ is supreme. There is not a portion of the universe where His sway is not felt and confessed. There is not a locality abandoned. That dominion extends to the place of banishment, the abode of the lost. Kings many dwell in hell. Princely titles are given to them. They are designated "principalities" and "powers," "spiritual wickedness." They are masters in evil, but they are in chains. Jesus, while yet on earth, confronted some of these spiritual rulers, and proved His kingship over them by mastering them. His dominion extends also to heaven, the abode of the holy. Good spirits are

subject to His kingship. "The armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (ver. 14). These constitute His retinue, accompanying Him in His march of conquest, sharing His toils, sympathising with His purposes, and aiding His triumphs. With outspread wings they are ever waiting His behests; ever ready to execute His purpose, whether of judgment or of mercy. His will is their rule, His word their law. What a pledge have we of the final triumph of truth! If Jesus is the King of all beings, all forces, all laws; if all power is given Him in heaven, earth, and hell; if He regulates and overrules all events, we need have no doubt of the issue. From the beginning He keeps one end steadily in view, the subjugation of moral evil, the destruction of the works of the devil. We have spoken to you of the kingship based on atonement, but we would remind you of the kingship based on power. The title is written not only on the priestly vesture, but also on His thigh. But why upon the thigh? The thigh is a symbol of power. It is the strongest place in a man. It is the place where the muscles congregate. The angel of the covenant touched Jacob on the thigh, and sent him limping all the way through life, to humble him, and to remind him how weak he was even in his strongest place when God touched him. Hence the kingship of Jesus is written on His thigh. Men who will not yield willing submission to His authority and the claims of His love shall be made to yield unwilling submission to His retributive justice. If the milder aspects of His kingly character fail to subdue them, He must turn upon them the sterner aspects of that character. If the kingship of the vesture fail to subdue you He must turn upon you the kingship of the thigh. If the revelation of His mercy and love fail to allure you, He must by a revelation of power break what refused to bend. We all must be the subjects of either the kingship of the vesture or the kingship of the thigh. (*Richard Roberts.*) *The crowned Christ*:—1. Christ's perfect physical health and bodily beauty is a crown that attracts us. We read of His fatigue, hunger, and lack of sleep; but nowhere of inability to sleep, or of disgust of food, or of any physical infirmities. 2. There is the crown of intellectual wisdom. Not that, indeed, of scholastic and rabbinic lore; but there was a marvellous maturity of mind, a balance of faculties, a felicity, aptness, and proportion about His mental development. 3. The crown of moral perfection rests on the head of Christ. 4. Divine love. When on earth there was in Christ this element which drew men to Him. 5. The crown of suffering. 6. Power to save. This is operative here and now as well as in the future life. (*A. J. Lyman, D.D.*) *Many crowns—Christ as King*:—I. To understand this passage we must compare it with a very similar passage in chap. vi., where is described the beginning of a conflict which is here drawing to a victorious end. There the Rider on the white horse, going forth conquering and to conquer, is followed by riders on red and black and pale horses—powers which were to destroy, hunt, kill. Here these riders have vanished. Now, "the armies that were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." There "a crown" was given to Him. Here He has "many crowns," or rather diadems, upon His head. The same crown is still worn, but now it is glorified by many circlets, which have been added to it one by one. Each has been a diadem or crown of victory; each represents a new conquest over the powers of evil. II. Notice that the crown itself is the King's by gift (chap. vi. 2). This crown was given to Jesus at His Incarnation, when He came forth out of the heavenly places, conquering and to conquer. He had, indeed, before that day a crown which was His own by right and by inheritance. But that crown He laid aside. With infinite condescension He emptied Himself of all that glory (Phil. ii. 6–8). Then He accepted this crown as a gift. Being already King of the angels, King of the universe, He now stooped to become King of humanity. But this world, to which He thus came to be its King, was a scene of rebellion. He had to win His sovereignty, to vindicate and prove His title. Opposition had to be crushed, mighty foes to be vanquished. Each of His achievements wins for Him another circlet in that golden crown. The glory at the end will be infinite, even as His humiliation was infinite. III. There is an old reading which makes the text run thus: "On His head were many crowns having names written," as though each circlet contained its own description. Well do we know the single words which would glitter on some of the brightest of the diadems—Suffered; crucified; dead; buried; descended into hell! Each of them sounds indeed, like a defeat, and yet each is, we know, a stupendous victory. Then will follow those two in which His triumph is openly displayed—He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, &c. IV. The tale is not yet completed. More

circlets have yet to be added. The things which Jesus began to do and to teach up to the day when He was taken up, He left His Church to go on doing and teaching till the end of time. Not until all the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ will the crown of Jesus be complete, and the many diadems have reached their full number. Lessons: 1. The duty of loyalty to our King. 2. Personal devotion to our King. 3. Each should do something for the spread of His kingdom. (1) We ought to do it, because He is our King and the nations belong to Him of right. (2) We shall be anxious to do it, in proportion as we realise the beauty of His character. (*R. H. Parr, M.A.*) *Christ's kingly authority*:—I. Christ, in His mediatorial character, has a crown of SUPREME DIGNITY. II. Christ, as Mediator, has a crown of VICTORY. III. Jesus, as Mediator, has a crown of SOVEREIGN POWER. Unto Him is given all power in heaven and upon earth: as far as the bounds of creation reach, so far does His dominion reach. IV. Christ, as Mediator, has a crown of SOVEREIGN RIGHT. He has not only the power to compel, but the right to demand the obedience of every creature; and it is the great distinction between those who are and those who are not His people, that while all the creatures of God, whether willingly or unwillingly, must execute Christ's pleasure, those who are indeed His submit joyfully and heartily to His rule, and keep themselves ready to do or suffer whatever He requires of them, simply because He requires it. V. Jesus, as Mediator, has a crown of JUDICIAL AUTHORITY: "The Father Himself judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," &c. (*Wm. Ramsay.*) *The many crowns*:—I. It is most probable that special attention is hereby meant to be drawn: first, to that multiplicity of characters in which our Lord is set forth. Those words which we so glibly utter—Mediator, Advocate, Saviour, Redeemer, Intercessor—are not different words to represent the same thing. Every one has its own true and proper signification; every one gathers up into itself, and expresses a distinct and independent part of His work for man. But, further than this, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Being who possesses more than one Nature. These varied offices spring out of this further truth. They are the branches which grow out of the doctrine that He is at once the Root and Offspring of David, being both God and Man. II. But there is a further interpretation to be given of the mystic crowns. It is a remarkable prophecy of Isaiah when addressing the spiritual Zion, that is, the Christian Church, "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord," making the diadem of Christ to be the company of His elect. So also St. Paul writes (Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 19). The idea in all these passages is the same, that the disciples are the crown of the teacher. And, transferring this to our Blessed Lord, we get another, and perhaps the most blessed signification of the text, even this—that the crowning of the Redeemer, and His highest glory within the Heaven of Heavens, are the Churches which have been gathered unto Him, and the souls which have been saved through Him. Let us pause upon this thought in connection with the Mission work of the Church. Why should we take an interest in it? Why, with confessedly great calls upon us at home, must we contribute money and send men to labour beyond the sea? Now observe, first, that if there were no visible results to encourage us, we should still be bound to "preach the gospel to every creature." The Church forgets one main purpose of its existence if it forgets this. But observe, secondly, that God does seem to have vouchsafed us a measure of success, at least, in proportion to our exertions and the short time during which the work has been carried on. And whilst there is a great dearth of men abroad, is there not also a great dearth of prayer at home? (*Bp. Woodford.*) *The crowns of Christ*:—[See Matt. xxvii. 29.] Contrasts often powerfully reveal truth. But never did the universe present a contrast so striking as that suggested by our texts. Yonder in Jerusalem is a despised Nazarene, forsaken by His friends, hated, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns! Yonder in heaven is the same Being, gloriously appalled, crowns of victory on His head, worshipped by myriads of radiant spirits as "King of kings," &c. I. THE CROWN OF THORNS SYMBOLISED CHRIST'S SUBMISSION TO SIN; THE CROWNS OF GLORY HIS TRIUMPH OVER SIN. The world has often looked upon this most unnatural sight, this reversal of the true, Divinely-appointed order of things—the evil triumphing over the good. The Son of Heaven's King is crowned with thorns and crucified; who will keep His laws or care for His sceptre now? The sharp thorns which pierced Him have healed many a wounded heart. His death has been a spring of life to the world. His shame has won immortal glory for countless redeemed souls. II. THE CROWN OF THORNS SHADOWED FORTH CHRIST'S LOVE TO MEN; THE CROWNS OF GLORY MEN'S LOVE TO HIM. III. THE CROWN OF

THORNS SHOWED THAT CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS LIMITED IN ITS INSTRUMENTS; THE CROWNS OF GLORY THAT IT IS UNIVERSAL IN ITS EXTENT. The excited multitude would have made Jesus a King, and placed earthly weapons, soldiers, &c., at His disposal; but He thrust all these aside. He wore a "crown of thorns" to show that He was a King ruling not by force, but by influence, not by material instruments, civil power, &c., but by spiritual weapons, love, truth, &c. Universal dominion has been the dream of proud conquerors, Alexander, Napoleon; but they have traced their empires on shifting sands, to be obliterated by the next storm blast. But man's dream is God's sober truth. IV. THE CROWN OF THORNS UNFOLDED THE TRANSITORINESS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS—THE CROWNS OF GLORY THE ETERNITY OF HIS JOY. Thorns! Perishable in their very nature. The "many crowns" point to the everlasting joys which thrill the Redeemer's heart. His happiness is as permanent as His sovereignty. (*T. W. Mays, M.A.*) *The Redeemer's crowns*:—To our Lord Jesus Christ belongs the crown of—1. Royal descent. 2. Victory. 3. Empire. 4. Priesthood. 5. Every excellence. 6. Eternal glory. (*Preacher's Portfolio*) *Christ and His crowns*:—I. THE REGAL CROWN. 1. The crown of universal proprietorship belongs to Christ. 2. The crown of universal dominion belongs to Christ. II. THE VICTOR'S CROWN. The Redeemer proved Himself a conqueror in three respects: by His life, by His death, and by His resurrection. 1. He won the crown of unspotted obedience. 2. He won the crown of immortality. 3. He won the crown of championship over the grave. III. THE BRIDEGROOM'S CROWN. The Church is to be presented "as a chaste virgin" to Christ. Then "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Then shall another crown be added—the crown of universal adoration and gratitude. (*The Study*.) *The dignities of Christ*:—I. THESE DIGNITIES ARE OF PRICELESS VALUE. What on earth does man regard as more valuable than a "crown"? But what are all the crowns of the world to the diadems that encircle the being of Christ? II. THESE DIGNITIES ARE MANIFOLD. There is the dignity of an all-knowing intellect; of an immaculate conscience; of an absolutely unselfish love; of a will free from all the warping influences of sin, error, and prejudice. III. THESE DIGNITIES ARE SELF-PRODUCED. All His dignities are but the brilliant evolutions of His own great soul. IV. THESE DIGNITIES ARE IMPERISHABLE. How soon the "crowns" worn by men grow dim and rot into dust! But Christ's diadems are incorruptible; they will sparkle on for ever, and fill all the heavens of immensity with their brilliant lustre. (*Homilist*.) *The Saviour crowned*:—I. WHENCE IT IS THAT THESE HONOURS ACCUMULATE UPON HIM. 1. From the essential dignity of His nature. 2. From the offices He sustains in the economy of salvation. 3. From the exploits He has won and the conquests He has achieved. II. BY WHAT MEANS WE MAY CONTRIBUTE TO MULTIPLY THE HONOURS OF THE SAVIOUR'S NAME. 1. By our personal submission to His spiritual empire. We must all take a side. 2. By consecrating an individual interest to His cause. 3. By taking part in the great institutions of the times in which we live. (*M. Braithwaite*.) He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.—*The war in heaven*:—Who, then, is the being whom St. John sees in the spiritual world appearing eternally as a warrior, with his garments stained with blood, the leader of armies smiting the nations, ruling them with a rod of iron? St. John tells us that He has one name which none knew save Himself. But He tells us that He has another name which St. John did know; and that it is "the Word of God"; and He tells us, moreover, that He is called Faithful and True. And who He is all Christian men are bound to know. He it is who makes perpetual war, as King of kings and Lord of lords. He Himself is full of chivalry, full of fidelity; and, therefore, all which is base and treacherous is hateful in His eyes, and that which He hates He is both able and willing to destroy. He it is who makes perpetual war. He makes war in righteousness. Therefore, all men and things which are unrighteous and unjust are on the opposite side to Him, His enemies, and He will trample them under His feet. But the meek and gentle Jesus? That the Lord was meek and gentle when on earth, and is, therefore, meek and gentle in heaven, from all eternities to all eternities, there can be no doubt. But with that meekness and lowliness there was in Him on earth, and, therefore, there is in Him in heaven, a capacity of burning indignation against all wrong and falsehood, especially against that worst form of falsehood, hypocrisy; and that worst form of hypocrisy, covetousness, cloaking itself under the name of religion. For that He had no meek and gentle words; but, Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! How shall ye escape the damnation of Gehenna? And because His character is perfect and eternal—because He is the

same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—therefore we are bound to believe that He has now, and will have as long as evil exists, the same Divine indignation, the same Divine determination to cast out of His kingdom—which is simply the whole universe—all that offends, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. The wisest of living Britons has said: “Infinite pity, yet infinite rigour of law. It is so that the universe is made.” I should add: It is so that the universe must needs be made, because it is made by Christ, and its laws are the reflection of His character—pitiful because Christ is pitiful; rigorous because Christ is rigorous. So pitiful is Christ that He did not hesitate to be slain for men, that mankind through Him might be saved. So rigorous is Christ that He does not hesitate to slay men, if needful, that mankind by them may be saved. I know but too well that most people find it very difficult, always have in every age and country found it most difficult to believe in such a God as Scripture sets forth—a God of boundless tenderness, and yet a God of boundless indignation. Men’s notion of tenderness is too often a selfish dislike of seeing other people uncomfortable, because it makes them uncomfortable themselves. They hate and dread honest severity and stern exercise of lawful power; till it has been bitterly but truly said that public opinion will allow a man to do anything except his duty. Now this is a humour which cannot last. It breeds weakness, anarchy, and, at last, ruin to society. And then the effeminate and luxurious, terrified for their money and their comfort, fly from an unwholesome tenderness to an unwholesome indignation; and, in a panic of selfish fury, become—as cowards are too apt to do—blindly and wantonly cruel, and those who fancied God too indulgent to punish His enemies are the first and the fiercest to punish their own. “Christian,” says a great genius and a great divine—

“If thou wouldst learn to love,
Thou first must learn to hate.”

And, if any answer: Hate? even God hateth nothing that He hath made; then the rejoinder is: And for that very reason He hates evil, because He has not made it, and it is ruinous to all that He has made. Let every man go and do likewise. Let him hate what is wrong with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, for so only will he love God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Let him say, day by day—aye, almost hour by hour—“Strengthen me, O Lord, to hate what Thou hatest and to love what Thou lovest”; that so when that dread day shall come, when every man shall receive the reward of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil, he may have some decent answer to give to the awful question: “On whose side hast thou been in the battle of life? On the side of God and all good beings, or on the side of all bad spirits and bad men?” (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *The grand review*:—When my text, in figure, represents the armies of the glorified as riding upon white horses, it sets forth the strength, the fleetness, the victory, and the innocence of the redeemed. The horse has always been an emblem of strength. When startled by sudden sight or sound, how he plunges along the highway! The hand of the strong driver on the reins is like the grasp of a child. 1. Therefore, when the redeemed are represented as riding on white horses, their strength is set forth. The days of their invalidism and decrepitude are past. O the day when, having put off the last physical impediment, you shall come to the mightiness of heavenly vigour! There will be hardly anything you cannot lift, or crush, or conquer. 2. The horse used in the text is also the emblem of fleetness. The wild horses on the plain, at the appearance of the hunter, make the miles slip under them, as with a snort they bound away, and the dust rises in whirlwinds from their flying feet, until, far away, they halt with their faces to their pursuer, and neigh in gladness at their escape. More swift than they shall be the redeemed in heaven. O the exhilaration of feeling that you can take worlds at a bound, vast distances instantly overcome—no difference between here and there! 3. The horse in the text is also a symbol of victory. He was not used on ordinary occasions; but the conqueror mounted him, and rode on among the acclamations of the rejoicing multitude. So all the redeemed of heaven are victors. Yea, they are more than conquerors through Him that hath loved them. My text places us on one of the many avenues of the Celestial City. The soldiers of God have come up from earthly battle, and are on the parade. We shall not have time to see all the great hosts of the redeemed; but John, in my text, points out a few of the battalions: “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses.” Now, come on the battalions of the saved. Here passes

the regiment of Christian martyrs. They endured all things for Christ. They were hounded; they were sawn asunder; they were hurled out of life. Here comes up another host of the redeemed: the regiment of Christian philanthropists. They went down into the battle-fields to take care of the wounded; they plunged into the damp and moulded prisons, and pleaded before God and human governors in behalf of the incarcerated; they preached Christ among the besotten populations of the city; they carried Bibles and bread into the garrets of pain: but in the sweet river of death they washed off the filth and the loathsomeness of those to whom they had administered. There is John Howard, who circumnavigated the globe in the name of Him who said: "I was sick, and ye visited Me." Here goes Elliott, who once toiled for Christ among savages, saying to them: "I am about the work of the great God. Touch me if you dare!" Here comes a great column of the Christian poor. They always walked on earth. The only ride they ever had was in the hearse that took them to the Potter's Field. They went day by day poorly clad, and meanly fed, and insufficiently sheltered. But a shining retinue was waiting beyond the river for their departing spirits, and as they passed a celestial escort confronted them, and snow-white chargers of heaven are brought in, and the conquerors mounted; and here they pass in the throng of the victors—poor-house exchanged for palace, rags for imperial attire, weary walking for seats on the white horses from the King's stable. Ride on, ye victors! Another retinue: that of the Christian invalids. These who pass now languished for many a year on their couches. But I cannot count the interminable troops of God as they pass, the redeemed of all ages, and lands, and conditions. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) **His name is called the Word of God.**—*The victory of the Word of God:*—"The Word of God." What is it? where is it? is it at all? Has God spoken? If so, how has He spoken, and what is the word He has spoken? I. **WHAT IS A WORD?** A word may be broadly defined as that which expresses thought. Now, thought is expressed to some extent by language, but only to some extent. It is also expressed by action. Action, therefore, is a word. Conduct is a word. Everything that man has made or done is a word, because it expresses thought, and expresses it sometimes much more effectively than any spoken or written language can. The artist can best express his thought by a picture; the sculptor, by a statue; the musician, by his music. Action is a word. Everything that man has done or made is a word, because it expresses thought. The houses we build, the factories, the ships, the churches, the clothes we wear, the movements we make, everything that man has made or done, from the easiest and simplest and most trifling thing up to the hardest and most complex—it all stands for thought, is the expression of thought, is resolvable back into thought—the word, the embodiment, the manifestation of thought. In the Book of Genesis it is said that God speaks it into existence. God said, "Let there be light." Light is His word, the expression of His thought, and He speaks it. And God said, "Let the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the dry land, and living creatures appear"; the sun, the stars, the living creatures—these are His words, the expression of His thought, and therefore it is said, He speaks them into existence. Is there any other word that God has spoken? Is there any other expression of His thought? In making up the inventory of the contents of the universe, we must not leave humanity out of the reckoning; and if the sun, the stars, the great globe itself, be the expression of thought, and constitute the word of the infinite God, must not human nature also be regarded as the word of the infinite God? Yes, man is God's word as well as physical nature, expressing the thought of God. But that statement must be guarded, must be qualified. For nowhere in our ordinary life do we see what man is, and therefore cannot know from the study of the ordinary man what God is. We see much that is good and noble in the history of man, and we also see many things that are base and ignoble, and which our moral sense will not permit us in any wise to attribute to God; and looking upon these evil things in human history, we are forced to say, "Some enemy hath done this, and the tares have sprung up with the wheat." But let our eyes somewhere see the perfect man, in whose humanity there is no flaw or blemish; then and there we shall see the perfect word of God, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." II. And now, having found what in the broadest sense is meant by the Word of God, let us consider **THE VICTORY OF THAT WORD**; and, first, as we see it in the forms and forces of the physical creation about us. Physical science, as we call it, is the dominant study to-day, and marvellous are the results which have been accomplished by it. Not only have we explored the earth and gathered its hidden treasures, but the heavens, and the waters under

the earth, and all the forces of nature, we have gathered in golden chains around the feet of man. And yet if, as the result of all this, man is only becoming greater and richer in material products; if all the forces of nature which he has discovered and utilised are only giving him greater material growth and expansion, then, although to-day he can send his messages under the waters and across the seas, and the earth has been made to give its coal and iron and oil and mineral treasures to him, and the stars in their courses fight for him instead of against him, then I say that in spite of all these things he is just as much a prisoner—although, indeed, he is bound with golden chains—as in the days of Sisera and of Job; and, with the materialistic philosophy coming in to tell him that there is nothing but matter and force about him—no thought, no spirit, no heaven, no God—not even a “prisoner of hope.” Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die. But no! The physical universe about us is not merely matter and force; it is the word of mind. There is thought in it, through it, pervading it. It is the embodiment of the thought of God. And, looking at it in this way, then does human life become truly rich, and is “crowned with many crowns.” We are standing, not on the floor of a prison, with the walls of a prison around us, and the great sealed roof of a prison over our heads: we are living in the open of God, and “There is not a bird that sings, There is not a flower that stars the elastic sod, There is not a breath the radiant summer brings, But is a word of God.” But human nature as well as physical nature—the world of man as well as the world of nature—is the word of God. And in the perfect man Christ Jesus, as I have tried to show, we have His perfect word; and, oh, what victories that Word of God has wrought! The story of civilisation is the story of its triumph. All the best things in the world to-day, all the best and purest feelings that touch and sway, if they do not completely control, the heart of man—his highest conduct, his bravest deeds, his noblest sacrifices, his brightest hopes for the future, without which the future is cold and dreary and impenetrable darkness to him—that Word of God has inspired. By that Word of God we have been taught that we are sons of God; and, looking out upon the vast physical creation about us, or looking up through the moral and spiritual clouds above us, we have been able to say, “Our Father, who art in heaven, Thine is the kingdom of the physical creation about us; Thine is the power that is working mysteriously in our human life for our good; Thine is the glory for ever!” And, finding our fatherhood in God, we have found our brotherhood in one another; with the consciousness of that brotherhood we have been trying to live and perform our duties, and are trying, with many infirmities, to perform our duties to-day. Far as we yet come short of that ideal form of life, we are moving toward it, and will continue to move until at last, here or somewhere—it matters not, for everywhere we are in the open of God—here or somewhere we shall all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Jesus Christ. (D. K. Greer, D.D.)

The Word of God :—The Infinite Father has spoken two great words to His intelligent family. One word is Nature. “The heavens declare His glory,” &c. The other word is Christ. He is The Logos. I. The word of ABSOLUTE INFALLIBILITY. II. The word of EXHAUSTLESS SIGNIFICANCE. III. The word of ALMIGHTY POWER. IV. The word of UNIVERSAL INTERPRETABILITY. Even the written words that make up what we call the Bible are frequently uninterpretable. Hence their renderings and meanings are constantly fluctuating, and often contradictory. But here is a word that stands for ever—“the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” This word is a Life. A Life a child can interpret, and the greater the life of a man, the more generous, truthful, loving he is, the more readily a child can read and understand him. Hence no life is so interpretable as Christ’s life. (Homilist.)

The four names of Christ :—I. THE “FAITHFUL AND TRUE” (ver. 11). So was He: 1. In avenging His people. 2. In carrying out His purposes. It mattered not who or what withstood. 3. The past proves the righteousness of this name. His prophecies have been fulfilled. His promises made good. His precepts owned as just. II. THE UNKNOWN NAME. (Ver. 12, “And He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.”) It was a written name, but illegible, incomprehensible, to all but Himself. The names advance in majesty. “Faithful and True”—that is an august name, but it cannot be said to be incomprehensible, and known to none but Himself. Glory be to Him that we do know Him by that name, and that the name is rightly His. But now the ineffable nature of the Son of God seems to be suggested. “Who by searching can find out God?” Christ is more than all our thought, than all we

have understood or have imagined. Who knows what is the relation between Him and the Father, and what the nature of the union in Him of humanity and God? Who can understand the profound philosophy of the Atonement, the Incarnation, the Resurrection? "No man knoweth the Son but the Father"—so said our Lord; and this unknown name, written, though not read, endorses that sublime saying. And do we wonder that we cannot understand? Why, this we fail to do even with our fellow-men if they be of higher nature than our own. Let us be glad and grateful that, whatever riches of grace and glory we have already known, there is an inexhaustible fountain and an unsearchable store yet remaining. And now a name more majestic still is given. III. "THE WORD OF GOD" (ver. 13). IV. "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (ver. 16). (*S. Conway, B.A.*) *The armies which were in heaven followed Him.—Armies invisible and distant on the side of the good:—*I. THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN ARE INTERESTED IN THE MORAL CAMPAIGN WHICH CHRIST IS PREACHING ON THIS EARTH. They not only know what is going on on this little planet, but throb with earnest interest in its history. They desire to look into its great moral concerns. No wonder some in heaven are related to some on earth; they participate in the same nature, sustain the same relation, and are subject to the same laws. Here, too, stupendous events have occurred in connection with Him who is the Head of all Principalities, Powers, and that must ever thrall the universe. II. THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN LEND THEIR AID TO CHRIST IN HIS TREMENDOUS BATTLES. If you ask me in what way they can render Him aid, I can suggest many probable methods. We know that one great thought struck into the soul of an exhausted and despairing man, can repeat and reinvigorate him. May it not be possible for departed souls and unfallen spirits to breathe such thoughts into the breasts of feeble men on earth? If you ask me why Christ should accept such aid as theirs, or the aid of any creature in His mighty struggles, I answer, not because He requires their services, for He could do His work alone, but for their own good. By it He gratifies their noblest instincts, engages their highest faculties, and gains for them their highest honours and sublimest joys. III. THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN ARE FULLY EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE IN THIS MARTIAL UNDERTAKING ON EARTH. It was customary in Oriental lands for soldiers of the highest rank to go forth to battle on steeds. It is a law of Christ's kingdom that those only who are holy and pure can enter therein: hence these heavenly soldiers are furnished with "white horses," the emblem of purity, and "white linen" also. No one in heaven or on earth will Christ allow to fight under His banner who are not qualified, both in capacity and character, for the work they undertake. (*Homilist.*) *He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.—The kingdom of Christ:—*I. THE TITLE HERE GIVEN TO CHRIST. 1. Christ's Godhead. 2. His dominion. The kings and lords of the earth exercise but a contracted authority. Not so Christ. His dominion is so great, that it comprehends all principalities and powers in heaven, as well as all thrones and dominions upon earth. Yea, even the devils in hell are subject to His sceptre, and are compelled to obey His commands. II. THE WAY IN WHICH THAT TITLE IS DISPLAYED. 1. Christ's past victories. The Lord Jesus has already displayed His sovereignty over the whole earth, executing vengeance, whenever it was necessary, upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people, binding their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron. How often, when the iniquity of a land has become full, has He sent one of His four sore judgments upon that land, the sword, or the famine, or the noisome beast, or the pestilence, to cut off man and beast! And then as to individual transgressors—Adonibezek and Goliath, Haman, Judas, and Ananias—all serve as so many beacons of His righteous indignation, and show that, notwithstanding all the opposition of pretended friends and avowed enemies, His cause has prospered and triumphed; so that in every generation the Lord Jesus has been known for the judgments He has executed, snaring the wicked in the works of their hands. 2. His future triumphs. Blessed be God, the prosperity of the ungodly, and the low estate of evangelical truth, shall not always continue as we now see them. We may infer hence—1. The happiness of Christ's subjects. 2. The importance of knowing whether Christ is our King. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *King of kings, and Lord of lords:—*Let us consider over what the Christ is king—how many kings He holds in submission to Himself. This earth has been tyrannised over by usurping kings, under whose grievous yoke humanity has had to groan. It is a sad history, that of these kings of the earth. The ancient Romans had one dark page in their history—it was the annals of the kings. The story began very well, but it ended very terribly; and so deep and

indelible was the impression left on the national feelings by the record of the history of the kings, that even when in later years the Commonwealth and Republic gradually developed into an Autocracy, not even Julius Cæsar, not even Augustus, dared to assume the title of king. Cæsar became an emperor—a king he dared not become. But there is a still darker page in the history of the world, the annals of its sins. Where is the man whose breast sin has not entered? And what a tyrant power sin is! not an abstract idea, not a mere name given to a phase of experience, but an actual power exciting within us base desires, stimulating our neutral desires till they become base, perverting our reason, silencing our conscience, degrading our whole manhood, destroying our souls. We have indeed suffered many things from this king's tyranny; but to-night, as I survey the wondrous work of the Conqueror who has risen from His tomb, I rejoice to recognise Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, and first and foremost as King over this fearful tyrant. The rod of the oppressor is broken, and the staff of the shoulder the Lord Himself has undertaken for the human family. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." O glorious message for those of us who have found all our strugglings and toilings and efforts futile! Now, when a king has asserted his supremacy over any conquered power, it is to the credit of that king that he should maintain that supremacy; and the practical thought I want to press home on your minds is this: If the Lord Jesus Christ has gained the right to be supreme over the powers of evil, within and without; if this is one of the royal crowns placed upon His brow; let us glorify Him by believing in His power, and let us with unwavering faith call upon Him to exercise His sovereign prerogative on our behalf. Don't you see what honour you put on Jesus when you claim that in virtue of His resurrection power you shall be enabled to do as He has done—put your foot on the neck of that which has previously tyrannised over you? When you approach sin, let there be no wavering, no holding back. Let us not approach the powers of darkness as uncertain of the issue of the conflict. Oh, children of God, when you are called to go into the midst of temptation, do you advance with palpitating heart, with inward misgiving? Very well; then thanks to yourself if you do fall, and fall again and again before the foe, if disaster follows disaster, and defeat, defeat. What! shall we rob Jesus of His rights by conquest? Is it a fact that He wears the royal crown upon His brow, which He has snatched from the head of the fallen dragon? Is it true that "as sin reigned unto death, even so grace reigns by righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord"? (Rom. v. 21). Is it a fact that He holds this royal crown upon His brow? is He King of kings and Lord of lords? Is it true that He has trampled down transgression, and made an end of sin? Has this been the glorious result of His passion? Then you are not merely privileged to ask Him to help you, but to claim that sin shall not have dominion over you, and to look the enemy in the face with holy calm. Our blessed Lord before His passion makes this statement: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Here is another dethroned monarch—and a very powerful one. Very few of us have not felt something of his sway. Very few of us have not bowed down before his throne, and yet, thank God, he too is conquered! A monarch, but a dethroned monarch. He has no longer the right to lord it over those whom Christ has made free. The man who is living in fellowship with Christ will survey the power of this world with the eye of holy jealousy, just as a loyal subject of Great Britain would be jealous of any person setting up his throne in any part of the dominions of Queen Victoria. But how much stronger would be such feelings in the heart of the Queen's own son, partaker as he himself is of her rank and greatness! How his jealousy would burn against any pretender or usurper who should set himself up as a rival of the royal authority! Nor would he rest without doing all in his power to overthrow the obnoxious sway. Are we not sons of God, and heirs with Christ Himself of the glory of God the Father? Once again. He is supreme over that regal force within our nature which we call self. Yes, He has a rightful supremacy over every one of us. He conquered Himself as the Son of man, that He might teach us how to conquer ourselves; but, further, our wilful self has been crucified in Him, that we might be in a position to learn the lesson of self-mastery. He conquered for us, that He may conquer in us; He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again. Do you want to lead a happy, do you want to lead a powerful, a successful, a God-like life? The greatest of all obstacles to this you find to be the power of self. How are you to resist that power? Fix your eyes on the King of kings and the Lord of lords, as St. John did (chap. i. 13-18). It is as

we gaze at Him, and behold His glory, as one after another His perfections shine out on us, that we begin to abhor ourselves, to hate our selfishness, to find out that His will is better than self-will, His character is nobler than ours, and that to yield ourselves up to His control is better than to fight our own way, and thus He who once triumphed over Himself will triumph over us, King of kings, and Lord of lords! Then when He has asserted His royal rights as King over sin, King over the world, and King over Self, there is another force that now we may trust Him to do battle with—nay, He has done battle with already; and because of His victory, blessed be God, we need not fear to face the foe. Death is conquered! he is only now a tributary of Jesus, only the door-keeper who stands at the palace gate; and it is his duty to open the door whenever the Master sends the summons. There is a kindly look on his face now, and it is a friendly hand that he stretches out. If we have proved the power of Jesus Christ to raise us above sin, death has lost all its terror: the dying saint may stretch out his hand to welcome that dread janitor, who once seemed so stern, but is now become so kind; who smiles as one after another he gathers the children of God into the heavenly houses. (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Supremacy:—What would intimidate any loyal Englishman, if he were quite satisfied and sure, and that too from personal interview, that the monarch of the realm was decidedly and unalterably his friend? Would he fear poverty? Would he fear enemies? Would he fear dangers? Would he fear reverses of fortune? Oh! no, he would say, "The monarch is my friend, and he has all power to accomplish all I wish, and he is quite as willing as he is able." Now, I think this ought to rebuke our slavish fears—just to bear in mind, that our warmest friend is no less a being than "the King of kings and Lord of lords." I. It is the supreme Sovereign of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords, of whom it is expressly written, "He doeth as seemeth Him good in the armies of heaven," existing in His own eternal self-existence, dependent upon no being, but making all dependent upon Himself, He holds all worlds at His command. He is the Maker of all worlds, and the Maker of all kings and lords too; therefore, He surely has a right to be King and Lord over them. Moreover, He is the moral Governor of the universe, and, consequently, all things in it are under His control; He even giveth power to get wealth, and, if He withholds that power, and lets us sink into poverty, He still acts as King of kings and Lord of lords; and it is your business and mine to say, "Do as thou wilt with mine and me too." II. Now a word or two, in the second place, relative to the exhibition of His name. It is said to be written "upon His vesture and upon His thigh." You will read, by looking a little higher up in the chapter, that His vesture was peculiarly marked, yea, and stained—the name was perfectly legible. It is said that He was clothed in "a vesture dipped in blood." Does not this exactly agree with Isaiah's predictive inquiry, when he says, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozra?" and gives as the answer, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save"; and when the question is resumed, "Why is Thine apparel red, and Thy garments like one that has trod the winepress?" the answer is, "I have trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." Here then, I discover His official character. His vesture is dipped in blood, and He is clothed with this vesture down to His foot—the priestly robe, for He only is priest of our profession as Christians. Moreover, the name is written not only upon His vesture, but upon His thigh. Why was this? Was not one writing enough? Just for this express purpose, that His power might be held forth at every step. Wherever He steps, whether in providence or grace, absolute power goes forth with Him. Now what can a man do, as regards walking, running, or working, if the strength has gone out of his thighs? It is not so with our King. His strength is in His thigh—His name is written on His thigh—so that wherever He advances He is sure to be known as the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The power of Christ, as the eternal God, is conspicuous in all His movements, both in providence and in grace; by Him the worlds were made, and by Him they are sustained; yea, we are expressly told by the Holy Ghost (John i. 3). And this power is constantly put forth on behalf of His elect, blood-bought Church, inasmuch as He counts her interests His own. Cheer up, then, ye timid saints, your cause is not more yours than it is Christ's; nay, nor so much, for if He could allow the injury or the ruin of His Church, the name which is written upon His vesture and upon His thigh would be tarnished, nay, forfeited, and He would no longer be owned King of kings and Lord of lords. But, "it shall endure for ever," &c., (Psa. lxxii. 17). Yea, more, His name, emblazoned in glory, shall be the chorus of all the redeemed throng as long as

eternity shall roll on. Mark, I pray you, how, in the exercise of His prerogative, He subjects all beings to His will. He "brings every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ." Now, I ask, where is the king to be found that can do that? There are two ways in which He brings all beings into subjection, whether friends or foes. The first is by the omnipotence of His grace He brings every elect vessel of mercy to the knowledge of His will, to bow to His sceptre and live for ever; and of those rebels that would not that He should reign over them, He says, "Bring them hither and slay them before Mine eyes." III. Go on to mark that the highest expectations of the Lord's family are encouraged. His name written on His vesture and on His thigh is legible to all His saints. They see Him the King and the Priest upon His throne. They witness the victories He has already realised—they mark the sacred and cheering fact, that He has "spoiled principalities and powers," and has fulfilled what is said, "O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction." The ancient promise has been accomplished by Him, and the serpent's head is bruised. The grand victory was won upon Mount Calvary, by the glorious Captain of salvation, whom my text calls "King of kings, and Lord of lords." And now what remains but that He shall still go on on His white horse of pure gospel truth, from conquering to conquer. Here take, for a moment, a twofold view of His overcomings. He is going forth from conquering that sinner's heart to conquer another sinner's heart—from conquering that corruption of the old Adam nature of the child of God, to conquer the next that rises and struggles within him. He will go on conquering and to conquer, until He has conquered every elect vessel of mercy, and transformed them to His own image. Nor is this all, His conquests and His people's are one; for it is written concerning those that surround His throne, and walk with Him in white, that "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony." Well now, will you not buckle on your armour? Will you not furbish your sword? Will you not cry out for more help from on high to wield it? Will you not look in a menacing form at all your enemies? (*J. Irons.*) *Christ's kingly office*:—The office of king belongs to Him by eternal right, inasmuch as He is the Son of God. The Father constituted Him heir of all things. Being the express image of His person, and the visible shining forth of His glory, it is He who is to all created being its Lord and Ruler and manifested King. We are the work of His hands: we, and all our world. We owe Him allegiance by the very fact of our birth and our being. And we are the kings of earth; in our hand hath He put all the tribes of His creation: in our hands all the wonders of capacity latent in His inanimate works. We, and all this our dominion over which we reign, are His. And not we and our world only. There are hosts of happy spirits, rising through all the gradations of created glory, even to the very presence of God, and the skirts of the brightness which flows round and veils the eternal throne. These too, however lofty and holy, are His: Him they acknowledge as their King and Lord, by the very condition of their angelic being. Behold Him then, the Head over all things: the rightful and everlasting Sovereign of the universe of God. Such spectacle we might contemplate with adoration; with wonder, the more we thought, at His unapproachable majesty and power: but it has pleased Him to reveal to us greater things than these. The throne of majesty was not enough for Him: He must win a higher throne of love. To stand by the throne of God and rule, satisfied not the yearnings of His heart: He must come down among His own creatures, and endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and resist, striving unto blood: and fight and fall, but conquer while He fell, with the weapons of redeeming love. It was not enough for Him, to have created man in God's image, after His likeness; to be the rightful Head by creative lordship over their nature, the wonder of His universe: but when that image was marred, He must Himself descend into the tabernacle of the flesh, and gain for Himself another and a closer headship and kingship—so that He is now not only the Son of God, but the Son of Man: has not only His supreme and undoubted rights over our nature *ab extra*, as its God and Creator, but also rights far more wonderful *ab intra*, inasmuch as He is its second head and righteous root, and blessed renewer in righteousness. Let us pursue a few of the grounds and details of this His sovereignty. He is King of man, inasmuch as He is the only man who has ever fulfilled manhood. He is our King also, because He is the Head of our common nature. He has taken unto His personal Godhead our whole and entire nature, as complete as it was in Adam, and as free from taint as it was when Adam was created in it; and on account of this His being the second root or head of our common nature, and on no other account, it is, that every man has a part in Christ, that we preach Christ the

Saviour of the world, and call on all to look unto Him and be saved. He thus is rightful and undoubted King of that nature of ours, and of all that it has and rules, by virtue of His including it all in Himself, and standing before God as man; all we and our world being contemplated by the Father as existent solely in and because of, and as summed up in, Him. Advancing onward again with those new titles to kingship which He who by His own right was king, has been in the process of redemption pleased to make for Himself, we come to this one; that He has, besides His perfection in our nature, besides His headship over it, purchased it to Himself by the price of His own precious blood. Not only is He the light of the world, not only is He the second Adam, but He is the Redeemer. He became our representative, not in perfection only, not in entireness of bearing our nature only, but inasmuch as He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and bowed under the burden of the world's guilt in His own body on the Cross, and came up out of death triumphant, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. God and evil, God and impurity, cannot exist face to face: nor can He permit an unconquered antagonist in that universe which He hath created. But because, in the eternal verities of God, who counts not time, but sees as present all that happens in all time, Jesus had suffered, had died, had risen again, man was spared, nature was spared: the sun was commanded to shine on the evil and on the good, and the rain to rain on the just and on the unjust. So that as we are told, "in Christ all things consist," have their being: and to Him alone this existence of ours, and of things around us, this life and motion, and joy, and increase, is owing from moment to moment. Then, has He not a right to it all, as His? to us, and to all that is ours? to all that would have perished with us had He not died, but which is now preserved to us and to Him? And if He is a King, He has a kingdom. And what is His kingdom? In that wider sense in which we have treated of His sovereignty, it is the universe of God: all that ever was and is and shall be: but of that His kingdom we will not now speak. Let us rather tell of the issues of that lower and more limited kingdom, which He hath won here below among us, and see whether that have not for us a voice within our hearts, and a claim which grasps at the threads of our common motives and affections. Christ is the King of man. Who remembers this, who acts upon this, as he ought? Every man on earth is Christ's subject: He is your King and my King, and the King even of the poor heathen who know Him not: for He hath bought us all for Himself: He is thus our rightful King: and it is a claim which He will not forego. All kings shall bow down before Him: all nations shall do Him service. But O, it was not for this that He won for Himself a kingdom; not for this, that the wheels of His chariot might crush down all that opposeth, that He might hear His enemies calling on the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them; no, for He is, as we have seen, not only a King of right, but a King of righteousness to the sons of men. When Pilate asked Him in the hour of His deepest humiliation, "Art thou a King then?" in asserting His Kingship, He added, "For this cause was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." There is no truth, but in Him: and whatsoever is true is His, part of His kingdom, and woven into His design, and blessed by His sanction, and matured by His fostering Spirit. Here is the Redeemer's more glorious, more heavenly kingdom; the kingdom of truth, and purity, and holiness, and love. But the question arises, What is this truth of which He is speaking? Is it truth in science merely—is it truth in art—those subtle powers of harmonising with God's creative laws, which seem as if they might and do exist where there is no deeper truth of heart and life? Is it, in a word, any of those outlying branches of truth, which seem as if they were rooted in earth for themselves, and got no life from the parent stem? Let us reply to this in His own words, "I am the way and the truth and the life." It is He who has revealed to us the truth, and He has revealed it in Himself. And as He is the revelation and the fountain of truth, so in order to be a subject of His blessed kingdom of truth must a man enter into it by Him: by knowing Him and believing Him, and being knit unto Him, and living his common life by virtue of faith in Him. This process of self-renunciation, this acceptance of Him as King, and of His Spirit as guide of His life, must accompany all effectual entrance, with the will and the affection, into His kingdom of grace—all heirship of His kingdom of glory. Such a kingdom then is God establishing on earth among men: a kingdom of truth and mercy and love, of which His Son is the Head and King. Day by day He is calling its subjects out from among the falsehood and the strife which is the rule of life of this world. Among the nations, He is preparing it; in His own way, not in ours. He is still

suffering the darkness to prevail over wide tracts of this earth: still permitting the oppressor to oppress, and the truth to be kept down: but it is that that truth, by trial and by sifting, may become purer and surer. And we look for a day when that His kingdom, which sprung not out of this world, shall yet be manifested in this world and rule over this world. But we are called on by our text to look forward further even than this. Its words treat of a time when Christ's kingdom shall have passed altogether out of conflict into triumph, out of grace into glory. (*Dean Alford*).

Christ a King.—This title is one of very extensive meaning. Other kings are usually content to wield the sceptre over an empire of private individuals. But instead of being king over individuals in a private capacity, our Lord claims to be the King of kings. Princes and monarchs of every degree of power are subject to His control. Before Him they all are required alike to bow, to pour forth their gratitude, and to offer a tribute of adoration. I. Contemplate Him as the mighty God, the everlasting Father; as Him by whom the foundations of the earth were laid, and the work of whose hands are the heavens. Contemplate Him as invested with all the attributes and perfections of the Deity, and you will see that His control is illimitable, and that His government is without termination. II. What is the practical use of this truth? 1. If Christ be the King of kings, the almighty Ruler of the universe, then we have confidence that all the dispensations of Divine providence will be such as to promote the general interests of His people. 2. If Christ be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, then we have confidence that He will so direct whatever pertains to our spiritual interests, as to promote and secure our growth in grace, and our final salvation. 3. If Christ be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, then the Church is safe. 4. If Christ be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, then individual Christians are safe. 5. If Christ be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, then His people have no occasion to be ashamed of their Lord, or of the principles of His government. 6. If Christ be so great a King, He ought to be feared. He wields all the machinery of nature, and can bid winds, lightnings, tempests, diseases, arrest, scourge, or destroy His enemies. He can turn against them the tide of human passions, and thus overwhelm them in dismay. Even our breath is in His hands; and subject to His control are all our ways. He has power to destroy both soul and body in hell. 7. He ought to be adored. 8. If Christ be so great a King, His enemies ought to tremble before Him. (*J. Foot, D.D.*)

The mark of the beast.—*The mark of the beast*.—In the eyebrows of some people there are one or two hairs that are thicker and longer than the others, and stand out like the whiskers of a cat. A good many persons have the round fold in the upper part of their ears ending in a blunt point, like the tip of an animal's ear folded down. At school I knew a boy who had the strange power of moving his ears at will, like a dog or a rabbit; and there was one big lad who could contract the skin of his head so strongly that, by the mere power of his muscles, without moving his head, he could throw off a book laid upon it. Some people have great canine teeth, and others have their face and body covered all over with thick hair. These things are said by scientific men to be the signs of man's origin from the lower animals, and remain as traces in some persons of the stages through which all the human race has passed. The lower animals are our poor relations; and it ought not to be considered strange if we should retain many marks and proofs of the relationship. Every human being has the mark of the beast in him, to show that God has made all animal structures after the same pattern; and united together all His creatures, from the highest to the lowest, by ties of mutual resemblance and sympathy, so that they all might be able to live harmoniously together on the earth. But there is a mark of the beast that ought to make us ashamed—that does degrade us. It is the mark of sin in our souls which destroys the image of God within us, and reduces us to the level, nay, below the level, of the beasts that perish. For the dumb, irrational animals faithfully obey the instincts of their nature, and God can say of them, "The stork in the heavens knoweth its appointed time"; "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib"; but of man He says, "Israel doth not know, My people do not consider." The animals obey in every respect the will of God; they cannot but obey; but we are continually breaking His commandments, and doing things that are contrary to His will and to our own welfare. One of the marks of a beast is impatience and hasty rage if it does not get its own way. The reason is that dumb animals have no other way of expressing themselves; and you find that the more limited the power of utterance, the quicker and more violent is the temper. And when any of us yield to the temptation of indulging in rage and violence and impatience, we show very distinctly upon us the mark of the beast,

and forfeit our glorious gift of gentle and dignified speech, and descend to the level of the beast. So, too, with falsehood and dishonesty. Wild beasts steal from one another and deceive one another without compunction, for that is their nature, and in the stern struggle of life they have to be selfish and to take care of themselves at the expense of others. But in us who have a high moral nature, such acts would be wrong. Such marks of the beast in us would degrade us in our own esteem and in the estimation of others. Wild beasts kill each other without any mercy or remorse. And alas! many human beings have this wild-beast nature in them. If they do not go the length of acts of bodily violence, they wound each other in their hearts and characters. They are guilty of many acts of unkindness and positive cruelty to each other. Animals rend the sick or lame animal. Wolves will devour the unfortunate wolf that is wounded in the pack; and, therefore, animals instinctively avoid their fellows when they are hurt in any way, and seek the loneliest solitude in which to suffer or die in peace. All human beings who act in the same way—who, when they discover a weakness or a failing in their friends and neighbours, hasten to crush them altogether; who, if they discern a pin-hole, wish to work it into a huge gap, and, if they can only get their fingers in, long to rend the piece asunder—all such persons have the mark of the beast. It is an awful truth, that the more the image of God disappears in us, the more do the marks of the beast manifest themselves. What is it that can remove the mark of the beast in man, and restore the image of God? The brute elements cannot drop out of man's character by a natural process, however favourable may be his environment; the human race of its own accord cannot grow better, as surely as the bud expands into the perfect flower. Scientific men themselves tell us that the natural process is not necessarily upwards to better things, but may, indeed, be downwards to worse; especially if the surrounding circumstances and conditions of life be degrading. And we might well despair of the future of our race, if it were left to the force of natural evolution alone to work out the beast in man, and let the ape and tiger die. It is here that the power of spiritual religion comes in. The regenerating forces of living Christianity can be trusted to raise and renew mankind. You know that loveliest and most instructive of all the fairy tales—the familiar story of Beauty and the Beast. You remember how the merchant was to be put to death for plucking the bunch of roses in the garden of the Beast, and how his youngest and fairest daughter, whom he loved the most, offered to take his place and suffer his doom. When Beauty first saw the frightful form of the Beast, she was dreadfully afraid, and shrank from him; but by and by, as she got to know him better, she began to feel pity for him, and was touched with his gentleness and kindness. At last she agreed to marry him; and then a wonderful thing happened. Instead of the ugly beast, she saw a handsome and graceful young prince, who thanked her with the tenderest expressions for having delivered him from the wicked enchantment that had transformed him into a beast. The moral of this lovely story, which is as old as the hills and as young as each child in our midst, is that it is love that changes the beast in us into the nobler human nature, that takes away all the marks of the beast in us, and transforms us into true men and women. And so, in the highest sense of all, is it not the pure, disinterested love of Jesus Christ, who consented to take our nature, and die in our room and stead, and who unites us to Himself by an everlasting union, that takes away all the marks of the beasts in us, the old, sinful, degraded nature, and transforms us into His own likeness by the renewing of our minds? United to Christ, we become new creatures; the image of God is restored in us; our faces shine as the face of Moses shone when he came down from his communion with God on the mount. It is said of the great St. Francis of Assisi, that he prayed earnestly on one occasion, that he might realise in his body, as well as in his soul, the sufferings of Christ; and immediately there appeared in his hands the prints of the nails, and in his side the wound of the spear, which he bore all the rest of his life, but carefully hid, for he did not wish to expose to the eyes of cold curiosity the secret which made him one with his Lord. But not in visible imprint, not in fleshly wounds, do we bear the signs of the cross; no, but in holy affections, in crucified tempers, in heavenly desires, in Christlike meekness and gentleness. The Brahmins of India have a mark upon their foreheads in honour of the god they worship, by which every one can distinguish them. And so those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and serve Him have a mark upon their foreheads, by which all men can take knowledge of them that they are keeping company with Him. They have what the high priest of old had inscribed upon the gold plate of his mitre, in a pure and candid and heavenly look, "Holiness to the Lord."

And as they grow in likeness to Christ, so this bright sign of their high calling will be more clearly seen, and their outward beauty will be as their inward grace. In the old creation we see how beasts of low type and cruel nature, that wallowed in the mire, were swept away, and creatures of higher organisation and gentler mood appeared on the earth in their place. The wonderful researches of geology have made us familiar with this significant fact, that after forms that were emblems of evil, there gradually rose others that were emblems of good; and the Bible tells us that the new creation will develop this progress on a higher plane; that eventually all serpent-forms of evil will be subdued, and the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and a little child shall lead the most ferocious creatures. He who was with the wild beasts in the wilderness of the temptation will change the wilderness of men's souls, with its wild beasts of evil passions and tempers, into a fair and fertile garden, the home of gentle and holy graces. And John shows us, in his glorious vision in Revelation, those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, standing on the sea of glass as the symbol of their purity, and having the harps of God as the symbol of their harmony, and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb as the token of their triumph. They have obtained the final victory over the beast in man; they have risen completely out of the degradation of sin; they have had all the marks of the beast obliterated, and all the image of God restored in their glorified souls and bodies. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XX.

VERS. 1-3. An angel . . . having the key of the bottomless pit.—Satan :— 1. Whereas it is said that this Angel that came down from heaven had the key of the bottomless pit, we see that our Saviour has all power given to Him in heaven, the earth, and hell itself. 2. That He had a great chain in His hand, shows us that how mighty and malicious soever Satan may be, yet for our comfort Christ has him in a chain, without whose permission he can do nothing. 3. Whereas Satan is called an old serpent, we see to whom they are like who are habituated in wickedness and crafty to do evil. 4. Whereas he is called the devil, or an accuser, we see whose brood they are who in like manner are false accusers of their brethren, slanderers, &c. 5. He is also called Satan, that is, an enemy to God's glory and man's good of salvation, therefore whoever by doctrine or practice impairs the one, or opposes the means of the other, they are satanical, and like him. 6. Whereas it is said that Satan was shut up, that he should deceive the nations no more, we see that his task from the beginning hath been deceiving, using fraud where he cannot prevail by force; wherefore we should beware of his deceiving in his subtle instruments, and acknowledge whose brood they are. 7. Whereas it is said that he was bound up so long that he should deceive no more, this shows that on the contrary, therefore, when we see seducers arise and abound, that then Satan in his instruments for the punishment of a nation or Church is set loose to be a lying spirit in the mouth of false prophets. 8. Whereas it is said that after the time of his binding or shutting up he is to be loosed a little season, this is greatly for the comfort of the godly, that Satan's prevailing in his instruments is determined by God, and shall be but for a little season; therefore with patience let them possess their souls. (*Wm. Guild, D.D.*) **He laid hold on the dragon.—The great enemy of humanity :—**I. THE GREAT ENEMY OF HUMANITY DESCRIBED. "Dragon" stands as an emblem of power. His power is seen in the vast authority which he wields. 1. Over fallen angels (Eph. vi. 11, 12). He is the leader of those myriads. 2. The authority he exercises over men. He leadeth the world captive at his will. He worketh in the "children of disobedience." He opposes God, Christ, the universe. The existence of such a being in the universe as this impresses us with—(1) The fallibility of the holiest creature. (2) The independent force of moral mind. (3) The mysteriousness of the Divine government. II. THE GREAT ENEMY OF HUMANITY IMPRISONED. 1. His imprisonment is effected by a Divine messenger. 2. His imprisonment is effected by Divine authority. 3. His imprisonment is effected by a Divine instrument. What is the chain? Gospel truth. What is meant by imprisoning Satan? Limiting the sphere of his agency. Every man who expels

him from his own heart helps to imprison him, and every man who seeks to expel him from the heart of others helps to imprison him. As liberty binds the influence of slavery, intelligence the influence of ignorance, religion the influence of infidelity, so Divine truth will bind the influence of the devil. Lesson : 1. The true sphere of heroic action. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Resist him as he is on the arena of your own soul ; resist him as you find him on the arena of society in everyday life. 2. The grandeur of the Christian character. "Put on the whole armour of God," &c. (*Homilist*.) *The scene of moral struggle :—*I. REDEEMED HUMANITY HAS A FEARFUL ANTAGONIST TO CONTEND WITH. 1. The actual existence of such an enemy. (1) Universal belief of humanity. (2) The opposite classes of moral phenomena. In the world we have error, selfishness, infidelity, misery, and truth, benevolence, religion, happiness. Can these be branches from the same root ? (3) The general teaching of the Bible. 2. The personality of such an enemy. An evil principle implies an evil person. 3. The characteristics of such an enemy. (1) Mighty. (2) Crafty. (3) Virulent. II. HEAVEN HAS VOUCHSAFED AN AGENCY WHICH IS DESTINED TO MASTER THE ADVERSARY. Let the word "angel" here stand for every true religious teacher. 1. His authority. Every man who has the true spirit and power of a teacher has the "key" or the authority to teach. He has a right to do battle with the enemy wherever he is found ; whether in literature or commerce, churches or governments, theories or practices. 2. His instrumentality. "A chain." Iron, brass, adamant ? No. These cannot fetter intellect or manacle soul. Nothing can curb or restrain the influence of Satan but Christian truth. What is meant by binding Satan ? It does not mean the binding of his being or faculties, but the binding of his influence. He is to be bound, in the sense of limiting his sway, by closing up human hearts against him. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Bound him a thousand years.—Satan bound for a thousand years :—*I. THERE IS IN THE WORLD A MIGHTY FORCE OF EVIL. II. MIGHTIER FORCES OF GOOD, ALTHOUGH UNSEEN, ARE IN THE BACKGROUND. III. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE MIGHTIER AGAINST THE MIGHTY HAS BEEN MATTER OF ANCIENT PROMISE (*Gen. iii. 5*). IV. THE STRONGER FORCE OF GOOD HAS EVER BEEN AT WORK. This world has never been given up to the evil one. V. WHEREVER THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN PREACHED THERE A BINDING OF SATAN HAS BEEN AND IS BEING EFFECTED. VI. NEVERTHELESS, THE PASSAGE BEFORE US LEADS US TO EXPECT A MUCH GREATER RESTRAINT ON SATAN'S ACTIVITY THAN HAS AS YET BEEN KNOWN. VII. WHEN THE BINDING OF SATAN IS COMPLETELY EFFECTED, THERE MUST NEEDS BE A PERIOD OF REST, SUCH AS NEITHER THE WORLD NOR THE CHURCH HAS ENJOYED SINCE "SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN." Note—1. Let our faith embrace all that is in the Word, and we shall then find nothing in the fiercest conflicts of the age to shock or disturb it. 2. Let us thank God for the restraint which we know is even now put upon Satan. He worries, but he cannot devour. 3. Let us be stimulated by the fact that, through the energy of the Spirit of God, the power of evil is being subdued within us and around us. 4. Let us, with renewed faith, energy, prayer, and hope, be found doing our part towards bringing about earth's time of rest. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*)

*Vers. 4-6. The souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.—Martyrdom a testimony :—*I. Martyrs are SOMETIMES MURDERED MEN. All murders are not martyrdoms ; all martyrdoms are murders. For a man to spend his life amidst social scorn, civil disabilities, and religious intolerance, on account of his conscientious beliefs, is a martyrdom, his life is a protracted and painful dying. But thousands have been murdered, and that by every variety of method which satanic cruelty could invent. II. Martyrs are ALWAYS WITNESSING men. 1. To the invincibility of the human will. 2. To the force of the religious sentiment. 3. To the power of the soul over the body. III. Martyrs are OFTEN CHRISTIAN men. Those whom John saw were those who were "witnesses of Jesus, and for the Word of God." 1. They bare witness to the sustaining grace of Christ. 2. They bear witness against the lukewarmness of living Christians. IV. Martyrs who are Christians ENTER HEAVEN. 1. As an encouragement to the persecuted Christian. 2. As a warning to persecutors. (*Homilist*.) *Lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.—The millennium :—*It is seldom that our sermons bear on the prophecies, and especially on the unfulfilled prophecies. Several reasons bind us to this reserve. First, the study of unfulfilled prophecies has only a secondary importance, and is not essential to salvation. Further, and just because they are not essential to salvation, the unfulfilled prophecies are wrapped up in a considerable amount of obscurity. This fact proves that the study of the prophecies is not without dangers, and that is

another reason which should bind a person to devote himself to it only with moderation. Those who give themselves up too exclusively to this study are easily tempted to hand over to the background the great truths of the faith, in order to devote their chief interest to speculations, curious, perhaps, and often attractive; but nearly always without benefit to practical life, and sometimes even dangerous. Nevertheless, it must not be inferred from what precedes that we absolutely condemn the study of the prophecies. Far from it. Restrained within its legitimate bounds, the study of the prophecies presents not only matter of great interest but of great blessing, and many Christians do wrong when they lay aside completely that considerable portion of the Holy Scriptures. I desire particularly to call your attention to that glorious reign of Christ which is announced in a great number of prophecies, and more particularly in the words of our text, and which is known in the Christian Church under the name of the millennium. What meaning should we give to these declarations, and in what will that reign of Christ upon earth precisely consist? Two different systems divide on this point those Christians who are occupied with the prophecies. A certain number of them take the declarations of Scripture in their literal sense; they believe that the Saviour is really to return to the earth, to found here a temporal kingdom; that He will literally sit in His body on the throne of David; that during that reign, which will continue a thousand years, the believing dead only will rise to have part in the glory of their Head; and that this kingdom of Christ will be an epoch of temporal prosperity. The other class of interpreters understand these prophecies in a figurative sense. They think that by the reign of Christ must be understood the dominion which He exercises over souls by the gospel, and that the main point in these magnificent oracles is the spiritual progress of the Church; they think that this resurrection of believing souls spoken of in our text denotes nothing more than the awakening of the spirit of faith. The Christian law having become the rule, and infidelity the exception; the gospel covering the whole earth with its sweet and holy influence; that is what the millennium would be. Of these two interpretations we do not hesitate to prefer the last. 1. Observe, first, that the spiritual or symbolical interpretation is more in agreement with the modes of style observed in general by the prophets, and in particular in the Apocalypse. This style, from one end of the book to the other, is essentially symbolical and figurative; everywhere moral ideas are concealed under a veil of material images; words are incessantly turned aside from their proper meaning to receive meanings altogether novel. In this style, quite impregnated with the symbolical, a church becomes a candlestick, a minister becomes a star. 2. Not only is that interpretation legitimate, in so far as it is in agreement with the analogy of Scripture, but it is in a manner required by the very expressions of our text. In fact, observe well that St. John speaks only of the "souls" of those who had been put to death for the testimony of Jesus; these are the souls which are to revive again and reign with Christ. Now, souls cannot rise again, in the proper sense of the word. 3. In the third place, the literal interpretation is not in harmony with the other passages of Holy Scripture which relate to the resurrection. Nowhere is the resurrection spoken of as to take place twice or at two different periods. This great event is always represented to us as to take place for all men at once, with this only difference, that the resurrection of the just will immediately precede that of the wicked. The following passages clearly establish this (Dan. xii. 2; John v. 28; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). It evidently follows from these statements that the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the wicked, shall be immediately followed by the judgment and eternal life. 4. In the fourth place, it is impossible to comprehend how a return to the earth could add anything to the happiness of the righteous who died in the faith, and are gathered into the rest which is reserved for the people of God. The error of the Jews consisted precisely in representing the Messiah as a temporal King; it is into a similar error that the millennarians of to-day fall. 5. And then, what becomes, in the system of literal interpretation, of the death of believers who are born during the millennium? In the actual state of things, the death of believers is a deliverance; they die in peace, because they leave a life of trials and an abode of misery to go to the Lord; but it would not be so during the period of the millennium, if the literal interpretation were true. 6. If the literal interpretation were true, there would then be three comings of Christ—one to save the world, another to judge it, and a third and intermediate one to occupy the throne of the millennium. Now Scripture constantly presents to us the last judgment as the Lord's second coming; and nowhere is an intermediate coming admitted. 7. Finally the text is the only passage of Holy

Scripture where a resurrection is spoken of to take place before the end of the world ; whilst a great number of other prophecies with regard to the millennium announce clearly the progress and general triumph of the gospel. Now, which is more rational : to explain numerous and clear prophecies by one single and enigmatical passage in the Apocalypse, or rather to explain the single and obscure passage by the clear and numerous prophecies ? To put such a question is to answer it. It appears then established, as far as we can be positive in such a matter, that the reign of Christ, known under the name of the millennium, is to be understood in a spiritual sense, and that the subject is the authority which He will exercise over souls by the progress of the gospel. The doctrine of the millennium, as we have presented it to you, has important consequences as regards conversion and as regards salvation. Indeed, since that glorious reign of Christ is a spiritual reign, since it will essentially consist in the submission of hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ, it depends upon each of us as to whether the millennium should commence in our case from the present : in order to that, no more is necessary than that we submit our heart to the gospel and give ourselves to Christ. May God grant that a great number of souls may know in this church of themselves this reign of Christ, at once so powerful and so tender, so sweet and so glorious ! (*H. Monod.*)

The millennium :—Scripture reveals to us, in a great many prophecies, that a time will come when the whole earth shall know God our Saviour : that is what it calls, in its figurative style, the reign of Christ. It does not follow from this, however, that all men will from the heart be converted to the gospel : the expressions of the prophecy go not so far ; they speak only of the knowledge of the Lord as about to cover the whole earth ; and we know that knowledge may co-exist with an unconverted heart. One of the features characteristic of that glorious period is that the gospel, by that very means through which it will have become dominant, will have penetrated to the most elevated classes and to the rulers of the nations. Governments will be inspired by the gospel, administrations will be Christian (*Psa. cxxxviii. 4, 5*). Jesus Christ shall then continue to reign in this sense, that His gospel will be seated on the throne in the person of sovereigns converted to the Christian faith. Then the religion of Christ will no longer be a mere political instrument in the hand of governments ; it will no longer cover, as with a sacred mantle, the views of a profane ambition ; it will be the sincere expression of the moral life of states. Among the blessed results which the gospel will necessarily produce in the world when submissive to its laws, one of those which Scripture puts in the first class, and to which it reverts most readily, is the abolishment of war and the establishment of a universal peace. Just as in consequence of the progress of civilisation and the softening of manners we no longer comprehend legal torture, just as we no longer comprehend slavery, so a time will come when men will no longer comprehend that there could ever have existed a thing so odious, so horrible, so absurd as war. At the same time that enmities will be appeased among nations, they shall also cease among individuals. Hatred, vengeance, personal violence, will come to an end ; the most unyielding characters will be softened ; concord, charity, sincerity will preside over all the relations existing among men ; natures the most opposed to one another will learn to draw near and love one another. At the same time that the gospel having become dominant, it will produce quite naturally another blessed consequence, which at first view does not seem to depend on its influence. I mean a considerable diminution of physical and moral suffering. Without doubt there will still be trials, but every person will then make an effort to alleviate the sufferings of those who surround him. In a word, the temporal happiness of mankind will increase beyond calculation, and will realise the most characteristic descriptions of prophecy (*Isa. lxxv. 18, 19*). At the same time that suffering will decrease, and always by a natural consequence of the benefits attached to the gospel, the duration of human life will be increased ; it will reach the utmost limit which nature assigns it ; neither vice, nor despair, nor violence, will any longer abridge the days of man (*Isa. lxxv. 20–22*). The extension of human life in duration will necessarily be accompanied by an extraordinary increase of the population. It is easy to understand how much more rapid that increase would be if wars, vice, intemperance, selfishness, poverty, and the want of confidence in God, did not come and put obstacles in the way. We may conclude that the number of men who will live on the earth during the millennium will go beyond that of the men who will have lived during all the preceding ages ; so that the portion of mankind which shall be saved will be infinitely more numerous, taken altogether, than those who shall be lost ; and that thus “ grace will abound over sin ” (*Rom. v. 20, 21*). That extraordinary

increase of population is moreover a characteristic feature of the prophecies relating to the millennium (Psa. lxxii. 16; Isa. lx. 22). Another feature of the glorious period when the gospel which has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come, shall prevail, is an unprecedented scope being given to industry and to the arts and sciences. Commerce will no more have for its spring selfishness, nor for its means fraud: consecrated to the general good of humanity, it will freely exchange the produce of all nations, and enrich them, the one by the other (Isa. lx. 17, 18). However marvellous the prospects which we have unfolded may appear, all these blessings are the natural and necessary consequences of the gospel having become dominant in the earth. Let the time only come when the whole earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, and all the wonders of the millennium are not only possible, but they are in some sort unavoidable. The whole question then reduces itself to knowing if it is really possible that a time should come when all the nations of the earth will be converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Observe, in the first place, that the gospel, from that very consideration that it is the truth, ought of necessity to make progress in the world, and gain little by little upon error. In its struggle against paganism the gospel cannot be overcome: it never has been, it never will be. The conversion of the heathen world can then be only a question of time. Observe, in the second place, that, in the very nature of things, the progress of the gospel in the world proceeds of necessity with a perpetually increasing rapidity. The result of each new year is not the same as that of the preceding one; but it is double, treble, or fourfold. The conversion of the heathen world is therefore sure after a given time, and everything announces that this time need not be very considerable. Let them come then after all, and tell us that the work of missions is useless; that the evangelisation of the world is a chimera; that the sacrifices made for the conversion of the heathen are lost; that all these efforts are but a drop of water which loses itself in an ocean. We know on what to depend. We know that missions are a work, not only appointed by God, but reasonable, productive, and full of prospect; we know that the millennium is not only a brilliant ideal created by prophecy, but that it will be the natural, regular, unfailing consequence of what passes now and henceforth under our eyes. A last question might remain for examination on the subject of the millennium: we do not attach great importance to it, for it is more curious than useful. What conjectures may we form as to the period in the future when the millennium should commence? Let us remark, in the first place, that from the present state of the world, and the progress which the gospel has made since the commencement of our century, it is to be presumed that the millennium ought not to be very far distant. A century and a half ought to suffice, according to all human probabilities, to bring about the conversion of the world. It is thus that the creation of the world was accomplished in six days, or rather in six periods; the seventh day, or seventh period, is a sabbath or rest. The ceremonial purifications ordained by Moses were continued during six days, and were terminated on the seventh. In the sacrifices offered for grievous sins, the sprinkling of blood was made seven times, on the seventh sprinkling the atonement was accomplished. In the visions of the Apocalypse, the Apostle St. John sees a book sealed with seven seals, each of these seals represents a period in the future of the Church. Since then it is a character, which seems essential to the dispensations of God, that they should continue during seven periods, and never beyond the seventh, we may suppose, by analogy, that the present world is to continue during seven periods of a thousand years, the last of which would be the millennium. That supposition acquires especially a high degree of probability when we compare the present dispensation, considered in its successive phases, with the account of creation. According to a very ancient tradition, and one found already among the Jews, the six days of Genesis would be six periods of a thousand years—a supposition which is confirmed by two passages of Scripture, where it is said, in speaking particularly of the creation, “That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” This moral creation, like the physical creation, is to be accomplished in six days, or in six thousand years. In the physical creation there is a progressive gradation from beings less perfect to beings more perfect; there is the same in the moral creation, where humanity goes on perfecting itself from age to age, and from one thousand years to another. The end of the millennium will be the signal of the events which are to mark the end of the world. “When the thousand years shall be accomplished,” the prophet has told us, “Satan will be loosed from his prison, and he will afresh seduce the inhabitants of the earth.” But that last seduction will continue but a moment, and

will bring with it the final defeat of all the powers of darkness ; the dead shall rise to appear in judgment, and the economy of time will give place to that of eternity. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's millennial reign* :—I. THE WITNESSES OF JESUS SHALL REIGN IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIMSELF, AS THEIR HEAD. As the Church is the spouse of Christ, she cheerfully acknowledges His supreme authority in everything, and reverently honours Him as her glorious head ; yet she shares the felicity of His victories, and, on the full establishment of His kingdom, she will be advanced, to reign together with Him and partake of His dominion. II. THE WITNESSES OF JESUS SHALL REIGN WITH HIM ON THE EARTH, AND EXERCISE POSITIVE POWER OVER THE NATIONS. The kingdom of Christ is heavenly and spiritual. It is the kingdom of truth and righteousness, liberty and peace, love and joy. But, notwithstanding the peculiar nature of the reign of Jesus, the earth is clearly represented as the scene of His dominion. He was encouraged to ask of the Father, the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. On the earth, He will divide the spoil with the strong ; judge among the nations ; rebuke many people ; break in pieces the oppressor. Can it be a low or carnal thing for Christ to reign on the earth ? Does it become them who are spiritual to despise that dominion as mean and carnal which God the Father promised to confer on His beloved Son, as the meet reward of His matchless humiliation and obedience ? Can that be unworthy of the esteem of His spouse which is not below the dignity of Christ Himself ? III. THE SAINTS SHALL REIGN PERSONALLY WITH CHRIST ON THE EARTH. The honourable privilege is not promised to His saints during their imperfect and militant state, which is the proper period of that course of humble obedience and discipline, by which they are prepared for their future exaltation. It constitutes an important part of that gracious reward which shall be conferred on the faithful soldiers of Jesus, after they overcome their spiritual adversaries and finish their good warfare. John saw them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus advanced to reign with Him as kings and priests of God. Nor shall this high privilege be exclusively confined to those who were beheaded, or in any other way put to death, for the sake of the gospel. The disciples of Jesus that lived in former ages shall share it generally ; and that not merely in a figurative sense, by the revival of the cause of religion, which they promoted during their lives, but by being put in the personal possession of positive power and dominion along with their glorious Redeemer. Those who share the kingdom of Jesus must certainly reign while He reigns. Their dominion, in conjunction with Him, must be enjoyed during the proper period of His mediatorial kingdom, and not after the termination of it. IV. THE SAINTS SHALL REIGN WITH CHRIST IN AN INCORPOREAL AND INVISIBLE MANNER. It is not said that the bodies of the slain witnesses shall be raised from the grave to sit on thrones with Christ. The resurrection of their bodies could indeed add nothing to their influence and happiness in reigning on the earth amongst imperfect creatures. The visible and bodily reign of Jesus and His immortal saints, among sinful men, would cut off all occasion for living by faith, and interfere with the performance of almost every part of gospel duty. We are accordingly informed in our text that, at the first resurrection, the *souls* of them who were beheaded for the witnesses of Jesus shall live and reign with Him. The souls of the martyrs are represented as living, and experiencing a kind of resurrection, at the commencement of the millennium, as they shall then be exalted from a state of rest and expectation to a state of activity and dominion. Materialists and sceptics may refuse to believe what cannot be perceived by the senses, and scoff at the doctrine of a future state ; but, if we confess the self-conscious existence of spirits and angels both good and bad, and allow that the angels are indefatigably employed in doing good or evil, according to their nature, why should we hesitate to admit the future activity of those holy spirits that shall live and reign with Jesus Christ ? V. THE SOULS OF THE SAINTS SHALL REIGN WITH VARIOUS DIFFERENT DEGREES OF AUTHORITY, in proportion to their religious attainments and sufferings while in the body. This may be considered highly probable, on the ground of analogy. All those works of God with which we are acquainted show that He delights in order and subordination. But Jesus has not left this important matter to be determined by human conjecture or remote inference. He has promised to reward His servants according to their works. The parable of the ten servants contains a striking example of this (Luke xix. 11–19). VI. THE SAINTS OF JESUS SHALL ALL REIGN WITH HIM IN A VERY GLORIOUS MANNER, FAR SURPASSING OUR PRESENT COMPREHENSION. The reign of the saints will be glorious, because all their former prayers shall be answered, their ardent desires shall be granted, and their long continued expectation exceeded.

They shall obtain their dominion from Christ Himself, as a token of His high approbation, and the gracious reward of their faithful services and patient sufferings while in the body. If the tokens of personal regard with which earthly sovereigns reward their principal servants be honourable, who can sufficiently estimate the glory of that reward which the King of kings will confer when He shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," &c. The saints shall reign together in a state of glorious harmony and perfect love. There will be no misunderstanding, contradiction, or bitter passions, among the spirits of the just made perfect. Their love shall be pure without dissimulation: its ardour shall admit of no decrease; and their felicity shall be mutually augmented by beholding the dignity and happiness of each other. They shall enjoy the most intimate and delightful fellowship with Christ Himself. They shall see Him ruling His enemies with a rod of iron, and subduing the hearts of sinners to Himself by the word of His grace; the progressive accomplishment of His promises to the gospel church will fill them with admiration and delight; and, whilst they share His victories and dominion, they shall cordially unite, with adoring angels, in ascribing the highest glory and praise to Himself (chap. v. 8-12; xix. 1-7). The extent and efficacy of their dominion shall be glorious. None of their adversaries shall be able either to defeat or resist them. The beneficial effects of their reign shall be glorious. Righteousness, goodness, and happiness shall be as general and abundant among mankind as wickedness and misery have hitherto been. All the joyful predictions of Scripture respecting the prosperity and glory of the Church in the last days shall be accomplished. The posterity of Israel shall be converted, with the fulness of the Gentiles. VII. THE SAINTS SHALL REIGN TOGETHER WITH JESUS DURING A VERY LONG PERIOD.

The Lord frequently pours contempt upon the princes of the earth by causing their great power to terminate in sudden defeat and debasement. The dominion of the saints shall not be of this transient kind. Perhaps the round number of years mentioned in the text ought to be understood in an indefinite sense, as denoting a very large space of time in a general way, the precise extent of which is not fixed. Conclusion: 1. The view of the text which is now presented ought to be examined with much candour and deliberation before it be altogether rejected. 2. The text sets before us an object of the most laudable and hopeful ambition. Compared with this dignity, all human distinctions are insignificant and vain; yet it is accessible to all the servants of Jesus, small and great. 3. This shows how reasonable and advantageous it is for men to forsake all that they have for Christ, in order to win Him and be found in Him. In forsaking all for Christ, we renounce only those things that are vain, ensnaring, and perishing, to obtain the righteousness of faith, conformity to His perfect image, and fellowship with Him in the enjoyment of His heavenly kingdom. 4. This subject furnishes a powerful incitement to faithfulness and perseverance in the service of Christ. 5. The hope of reigning with Jesus should induce His disciples to show all meekness and patience while suffering for His sake. The cross is the way to the crown. The meek shall inherit the earth. Those who suffer with Jesus shall reign with Him. 6. This subject affords strong consolation to believers in the prospect of putting off their earthly tabernacle. They know that their soul shall not sleep in a state of dark insensibility, while their body is in the dust. Death to them will be gain. (J. Gibb.)

The age of moral triumph:—I. THE ENTIRE OVERTHROW OF MORAL EVIL. 1. The great enemy will have lost his stand-place in the world. Error, prejudice, selfishness, evil passions, &c., will have gone. He will have no fulcrum for his lever. 2. The fall of the great enemy will be complete for a time. The more humanity progresses in intelligence, rectitude, and holiness, the more hopeless his condition becomes. II. THE UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST. 1. The only true sovereignty is spiritual. 2. A religious spiritual sovereignty over man is the great want of the race. He who rules the human mind—directs its faculties, energies, and feelings rightly—is man's greatest benefactor. This Christ does in the highest and most perfect manner. III. THE GENERAL ASCENDANCY OF GREAT SOULS. 1. They will be men who have passed through a spiritual resurrection. 2. They will be men of martyr-mould. 3. They will be men possessing exclusive ascendancy. 4. They will be men raised for ever beyond the reach of all future evil. IV. THE EXTENSIVE DURATION OF THE WHOLE. 1. This long period of holiness is a glorious set-off against all the preceding ages of depravity and sin. 2. This long period of holiness serves wonderfully to heighten our ideas of the grandeur of Christ's work. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *The blessed dead living and reigning with Christ during the thousand years:*—I. HERE IS A VISION OF MEN

FROM EARTH—not of men *on* it. “The souls.” (So in chap. vi. 11.) That the expression refers here to men in what is called the disembodied state, scarcely admits of question. They are clear and distinct words, fitting in with other statements of God’s Word, teaching us that the souls of the blessed dead have already passed into a higher life: that there is no lapse in their blessed relationship to Jesus. II. THE BLESSED SAINTS ARE SEEN IN A MORE ELEVATED SPHERE OF HOLY SERVICE. They are “living and reigning with Christ.” They share with Him the government of the world. Here they were “kings and priests” unto God. But in the higher state of being the meaning of these names, and the glorious dignity they include, become far more manifest than when here below. III. THEIR PASSING UPWARD, IN DEATH, TO THIS HIGHER STATE IS CALLED THE FIRST RESURRECTION. And most intelligibly so. “Surely,” says the Rev. F. D. Maurice, “if one takes the words as they stand, they do not describe a descent of Christ to earth, but an ascent of ‘the saints’ to reign with Him.” The thought of a real resurrection without a bodily rising from the grave ought to be no difficulty to those accustomed to scriptural phraseology. If, when a man passes from death to life, the phrase “risen with Christ,” is not inappropriate, neither can it be so when he makes the transition from earth to heaven to be “at home” with Jesus. IV. BLESSED EVEN IN THIS FIRST RESURRECTION, THE SAINTS AWAIT IN HOPE THE CONSUMMATION OF THEIR BLISS. The blessedness indicated here extends over the thousand years. While the Church on earth is enjoying its millennial calm, believers above are reigning in life with Jesus Christ. Knowing the blessedness of their first resurrection, they can look forward with joyful hope to their second. V. THEIR GLORY WILL BE CONSUMMATED AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY. “For this, as the ultimate outlook, the apostle says, believers are waiting (Rom. viii. 23). The first resurrection is that to a higher state of spiritual being. The second will be to the completed state of glorified life of both body and spirit. VI. FOR THE WICKED THERE IS NO SUCH FIRST RESURRECTION. “The rest of the dead lived not again (*ἀνέζησαν*) till the thousand years were expired.” For the wicked, death brings nothing which can be called a resurrection at all. “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.” After death they are not extinct. They exist. They are in Hades. But their life in the invisible realm is no “resurrection.” No such reward is theirs. They chose the paths of sin and selfishness, and they can but reap as they have sown. The statement of the text is, however, only negative. “They lived not again till,” &c. What their state is, positively, we are not told. (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *The reign of the martyrs with Christ*:—Instead of looking forward to some future age for the thousand years, is it not more reasonable and helpful to say that we ourselves are living in them? From the time when the Catholic Church was set up in the world and its principles exhibited, all that is noble and intelligent in man, all that he recognises in himself as immortal and made for a higher life, refuses to listen to the beast and to be deceived by him, but acknowledges the Lamb as its true King. The thousand years, *i.e.*, the long period which elapses after the setting up of the Church—and surely this interpretation is more in accord with what we get from the Bible than an arbitrary fixture of just one thousand years of 365 days each—these thousand years, up to this hour, have been marked by evidences that Christ has chained the devil, has proved Himself stronger than the devil, not merely when He resisted his temptations, but ever since. The earth has gone on acquiring new life and strength and capacity, just so far as it has recognised the Lamb for its true Lord, and thus purity has been exalted above lust, thus slavery has been abolished, hospitals have been built, the poor have been educated, prisons have been reformed, criminals have been appealed to by nobler motives than self-interest. There is enough to do yet, God knows; but what has been done has all been done on principles which Christ laid down, and what is still to be achieved will be done on the same basis, namely, that self-sacrifice is the true life of God’s earth. And what does it all mean but that Christ has chained the dragon? Then St. John says that he saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God—the early Christian martyrs, in fact—and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. They were killed: the world saw no more of them; but St. John says that *he* did. To him it was revealed what their subsequent lot was—they lived and reigned with Christ in the thousand years. They live and reign with Him now, therefore. Where? That we cannot tell. We know that they have not yet their perfect consummation and bliss. But see what we do know. Christ is reigning now. But is that reigning merely resting on His throne as a glorious spectacle to look upon? Which of us seriously supposes that reigning with Christ

means sitting with a golden crown on, holding a sceptre? The reign of Christ is a more real thing—a very active thing—and the martyrs who died for His sake, because they would not worship the beast, reign even as He does. There is to me wonderful help and consolation in all which this involves. The witnesses of Christ, who cared so much for their fellow men whilst they lived on the earth, who had laboured to do it good, and seemed to have laboured in vain, who had told their fellow men who their true King was; they, after they were no more seen, reigned with Christ, *i.e.*, they exercised a greater influence, had a greater power, than ever they had before, and became from the unseen world efficient servants of Him who had given up His life for the salvation of men. This is their high reward, exactly that reward which their Lord promised in His parable. He whose pound had gained five pounds was to be ruler over five cities. They are not offered idleness or luxurious indulgence, they are to enter into the joy of their Lord, to have the delight of knowing more and more of His purposes, and of working in conformity with them. They die and are seen no more, but any good deed which they have ever done goes forth conquering and to conquer. And, the apostle declares, this is the first resurrection, which they who have lived evil lives and followed the beast have no part in. How often we see good and faithful men, whose career is altogether useful and beneficial, cut off in the midst of their work! We think to ourselves, "How much good this man would have done if he had lived! What a loss to the Church!" So it seems to us, and so it seemed to the first Christians, for we are told "they made great lamentation over him." But God knew better than they. He took His martyr away that he might reign with Christ. Well, was there any evidence of his so reigning? Were any victories of his ever seen any more? Many, no doubt, which we know nothing about. (*W. Benham, B.D.*)

This is the first resurrection.—*The first resurrection*:—I. THREE PRIVILEGES. 1. Priority of resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 20; 1 Thess. iv. 13; Phil. iii. 8–11; Luke xx. 35; John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54). "I will raise him up at the last day." Now, is there any joy or beauty in this, to the people of God in particular, unless there be a speciality in it for them? It is the lot of all to rise, and yet we have here a privilege for the elect! Surely there is a different resurrection. Besides, there is yet a passage in the Hebrews where the apostle, speaking of the trials of the godly, and their noble endurance, speaks of them as, "not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection." The betterness was not in the after results of resurrection, but in the resurrection itself. How, then, could it be a better resurrection, unless there be some distinction between the resurrection of the saint and the resurrection of the sinner? Pass on to the second privilege here promised to the godly. 2. The second death on them hath no power. This, too, is a literal death; none the less literal because its main terror is spiritual, for a spiritual death is as literal as a carnal death. The death which shall come upon the ungodly without exception can never touch the righteous. Oh, this is the best of all. As for the first resurrection, if Christ hath granted that to His people there must be something glorious in it if we cannot perceive it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when He shall appear we shall be like Him." I think the glories of the first resurrection belong to the glories which shall be revealed in us rather than the glories that are revealed to us. 3. "They shall reign with Him a thousand years." I believe this reign of the saints with Christ is to be upon earth (Psa. xxxvii. 10, 11; Rev. v. 9, 10; Matt. xix. 28). You find such passages as these in the Word of God, "The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." You find another like this in Zechariah, "My God shall come with the multitude of His saints." II. To the ungodly THREE THINGS IN SIMPLICITY. 1. Sinner, you have heard us speak of the resurrection of the righteous. To you the word "resurrection" has no music. There is no flash of joy in your spirit when you hear that the dead shall rise again. But oh, I pray thee lend me thine ear while I assure thee in God's name that thou shalt rise. Not only shall your soul live—you have perhaps become so brutish that you forget you have a soul—but your body itself shall live. Go thou thy way, eat, drink, and be merry; but for all these the Lord shall bring thee into judgment. 2. But after the resurrection, according to the text, comes the judgment. 3. After judgment, the damnation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The first resurrection:—My conviction is clear that the resurrection here spoken of is the resurrection of the saints from their graves, in the sense of the Nicene Creed, where it is confessed: "I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." The placing of it as the first in a category of two resurrections, the second of which is specifically

stated to be the literal rising again of such as were not raised in the first, fixes the sense to be a literal resurrection. 1. It is a resurrection of saints only. They that have part in it are "blessed and holy." It is true that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). But it is immediately added, "every man in his own order." It is not a summary thing, all at once, and the same in all cases. The resurrection of the wicked is in no respect identical with that of the saints, except that it will be a recall to some sort of corporeal life. There is a "resurrection of life," and there is a "resurrection of damnation" (John v. 29); and it is impossible that these should be one and the same. There is a "resurrection of the just"—"a better resurrection"—a resurrection out from among the dead, for which great zeal and devotion are requisite (Luke xiv. 14; Heb. xi. 35; Phil. iii. 10, 11)—which is everywhere emphasised and distinguished from another, more general, and less desirable. As it is "the resurrection of the just," the unjust have no share in it. As it is a resurrection from among the dead ones, it is necessarily *eclectic*, raising some and leaving others, and so interposing a difference as to *time*, which distinguishes the resurrection of some as in advance of the resurrection of the rest. 2. It is a resurrection which takes place in different stages, and not all at one and the same time. Paul tells us expressly that there is an "order" in it, which brings up some at one time, and others at other times. It starts with "Christ the first-fruits"; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming; then (still later) the end, "completion, or last" (1 Cor. xv. 23, 24). Christ's resurrection was also attended with the resurrection of others (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). 3. It is a resurrection which as a whole is nowhere pictorially described. The reason is, that the subject is not capable of it. 4. The completion of this resurrection introduces a wonderful change in the earth's history. It is the breaking through of an immortal power;—a power which sweeps away, as chaff before the wind, the whole economy of mortal and dragon rule, and thrusts to death and Hades every one found rising up or stiffening himself against it;—a power which gives to the nations new, just, and righteous laws, in the administration of immortal rulers, whose good and holy commands men must obey or die. I think of the coming in of that power—of the havoc it must needs make in the whole order of things—of the confusion it will cause in the depraved cabinets and courts and legislatures of the world—of the revolution it must work in business customs, in corporation managements—of the changes it must bring into churches, into pulpits, into pews, into worship, into schools, into the newspapers, into book-making and book-reading, into thinking and philosophy, and into all the schemes, enterprises, judgments, pursuits, and doings of men. And a good thing it will be for the nations when that day comes. There can be nothing better than God's law. There can be nothing more just, more reasonable, more thoroughly or wisely adapted to all the well-being of man and the highest wholeness of human society. All the blessedness in the universe is built upon it. All that is needed for the establishment of a holy and happy order is for men to obey that law, for it to be put in living force, for it to be incarnated in the feelings, actions, and lives of men. And this is what is to be effected when "the children of the resurrection" get their crowns, and go into power, with Christ the All-Ruler at their head. 5. The completion of this resurrection promotes the subjects of it to a transcendent glory. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The first resurrection*:—I. WHEN IS IT TO BE? When the Lord comes the second time. In the preceding chapter He is described as coming with the hosts of heaven for the destruction of His enemies (1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 1). He comes as the resurrection and the life; the abolisher of death, the spoiler of the grave, the raiser of His saints. II. WHO IT IS TO CONSIST OF. This passage speaks only of the martyrs and the non-worshippers of the beast; but other passages show that all His saints are to be partakers of this reward. They have suffered with Him here, and they shall reign with Him here. III. WHAT IT DOES FOR THOSE WHO SHARE IT. It brings to them such things as the following:—1. Blessedness. God only knoweth how much that word implies, as spoken by Him who cannot lie, who exaggerates nothing, and whose simplest words are His greatest. 2. Holiness. They are pre-eminently "the saints of God"; set apart for Him; consecrated and purified, both outwardly and inwardly; dwelt in by Him whose name is the "Holy Ghost"; and called to special service in virtue of their consecration. Priestly-royal service is to be theirs throughout the eternal ages. 3. Preservation from the second death. They rise to an immortality which shall never be recalled. No dying again, in any sense of the word; not a fragment of mortality about them, nothing of this vile body, and nothing of that corruption or darkness or anguish which shall be the

portion of those who rise at the close of the thousand years. 4. The possession of a heavenly priesthood. They are made priests unto God and Christ—both to the Father and the Son. Priestly nearness and access; priestly power and honour and service; priestly glory and dignity;—this is their recompense. 5. The possession of the kingdom. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The first resurrection*:—Of these words of this first resurrection there are three expositions authorised by persons of good note in the Church. First, that this first resurrection is a resurrection from that low estate to which persecution had brought the Church. Secondly, that it is a resurrection from the death of sin, of actual and habitual sin; so it belongs to every particular penitent soul. And thirdly, because after this resurrection, it is said that we shall reign with Christ a thousand years, it hath also been taken for the state of the soul in heaven after it is parted from the body by death; and so it belongs to all them who are departed in the Lord. And then the occasion of the day, which we celebrate now, being the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, invites me to propose a fourth sense, or rather use of the words; not indeed as an exposition of the words, but as a convenient exaltation of our devotion; which is, that this first resurrection should be the first-fruits of the dead; the first rising is the first riser, Christ Jesus: for as Christ says of Himself, that He is the resurrection, so He is the first resurrection, the root of the resurrection. He upon whom our resurrection, all our kinds of resurrections are founded. (*J. Doune.*) *On such the second death hath no power.*—*The happiness of being saved from the second death*:—I. WHAT THE SECOND DEATH IS. A second supposes a first; and that which universally we have the clearest notion of is, that death which funerals and the mourners who go about the streets convince us of. For—1. Death, in the natural signification of the word, is a separation of the soul from the body. Plants die, and beasts and birds and fishes and insects die; and so man dies (*Heb. ix. 27*). And this is the first death, which all men, both good and bad, are subject to; and from which none can plead exemption, except preserved from it by the miraculous power of God; as were Enoch and Elias. 2. The second death no creature is capable of but man, no inferior creature; devils and apostate spirits are, but none below the dignity of man; for this death is the wages of sin, and contempt of mercy and the grace of God. This second death is a punishment. It is true the first is so too; but by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus that punishment is softened, or rather turned into a mercy, exchanged for eternal life; but from this second death there is no possibility of any release after it is once inflicted. And that we may rightly understand the nature of it, the Holy Ghost in the chapter before us specifies what it is, for so we read (*ver. 14*), “And death and hell”; *i.e.*, wicked men who had been dead, and the devil and his angels, “were cast into the lake of fire.” “This is the second death.” And again, chap. xxi. 8. II. WHY IT IS CALLED DEATH, AND THE SECOND DEATH. 1. The common death of mankind is a separation of the soul from the body; and there being in hell a signal separation, either of the soul, or of soul and body after the resurrection, from the love of God’s complacency and the society of saints, and from all joy and comfort, the true life of the soul, it is upon that account that this future torment is called death. 2. The unhappy sufferer in the lake of fire is always dying, and yet never dies; the anguish he lies under puts him into such agonies that one would think he is expiring every moment, and yet he lives (*Mark ix. 44*). 3. The sufferer in this lake wishes to die, and yet doth not die. The intolerable torment forces him into vehement desires after something that may put a period to his anguish. Common death frees men from the troubles and diseases of the body, and puts an end to the pain we feel here. 4. It is called the second death, *i.e.*, a death different from the common and natural. In this sense the word “second” is used sometimes (*as Dan. vii. 5*). And, indeed, it is a death of another nature, attended with other circumstances and with other consequences. It is, if I may say so, a death and no death; a death joined with sense, that breaks the man, but doth not destroy him; destroys his well-being, but not his being; his felicity, but not his substance. III. WHO THE HAPPY PERSONS ARE ON WHOM THIS SECOND DEATH HATH NO POWER, AND WHY THEY FALL NOT UNDER THAT DOMINION. 1. In this very verse, whereof the text is part, the persons to whom this privilege belongs are said to be “priests of God and of Christ,” which qualification is in other places ascribed to all the living members of Christ’s Church (*chap i. 6*). 2. As by the second death is meant hell and the lake of fire, so (*ver. 15*) it is said, “And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” From whence it will naturally follow, that such as are written in the book of life are not subject to that power, and over such the second death

hath no power. Now, it is certain that all Christians who are Israelites indeed, they are written in the book of life. 3. We read (chap. ii. 11), "He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." And who knows not that self-conquest and overcoming evil with good is the proper task and employment of all sincere Christians? And how should this death have any power over them? As they live to the Lord so they die to and in the Lord Jesus, and "blessed are the dead," &c. (chap. xiv. 13). The Lord that bought them secures them against that formidable power. The Lord that died for them, and hath abolished death, and triumphed over it, hath delivered them from that power. He is a wall of defence to them so that the power of this death cannot reach them. In a word, they are under another Prince, and therefore not subject to that power. Inferences: 1. There being such a death, even the second death, surely it deserves to be feared and dreaded. It is true there is none desires or cares to feel it, and so far all men may be said to fear it. But to fear, is to use the proper means to escape the danger. It is with fearing as it is with believing: he that takes no care to secure himself and his goods doth not believe there is a consuming fire in his house, and he that doth not arm himself against an approaching inundation doth not fear it. 2. It must needs be a very great privilege to be delivered from the power of the second death; a greater mercy than to be delivered from the deluge of Noah, from the conflagration of Sodom, from David's bear and lion, and from the most painful diseases; a mercy to be prized above being set with princes, even with the princes of God's people; a mercy which none can prize but true believers, and the more they believe it, the more they will prize it; a mercy that will be prized another day at a very great rate, even by the sufferers in the burning lake, when it is too late. (*A. Horneck, D.D.*) *Triumphant*:—At one of the prayer-meetings in America a person thus spoke:—"A few days ago I was in a church in another city, and my attention was attracted by a large marble tablet at the farther end of the church from where I was sitting. It was so far from me that I could not read it; but casting my eye downward towards the bottom of the inscription, I made out one word, 'Triumphant.' As I looked at that tablet on the wall, I thought, 'Well, that is all I want to know about that man.' I knew not whether he had been pastor of the church, or one of the elders, or deacons, or trustees, or who he was; I knew not whether he was a rich or a poor man; but this one thing I had reason to believe—that he died 'triumphant' in Christ; and that was enough." *They shall be priests of God and of Christ.*—*Soul priesthood*:—I. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE. The very idea of priesthood implies the practical recognition of God. God was to be everything to the priests of His appointment. He had to do with their clothing, their diet, their means of support. He was at once the Author, Master, and Object of all their ceremonies. They prepared their sacrifices by His directions, and they offered them to Him according to His will. Deep as may have been the impression which the high priest had of God's presence when he stood in the Holy of Holies, in the full light of the shekinah, it was not deeper than every man should have in passing through this life. But why should souls be ever conscious of God's presence? Why? 1. Because it is reasonable. His constant presence is a fact. Shall I recognise, as I am bound to do, all the little facts that come under my daily notice, and ignore the great fact that God is in all, ever present, never absent? Shall men of science give attention to the smallest facts of nature; write treatises on an insect's wing, or on the microscopic dust that floats in the atmosphere, and ignore the fact that God is present? If it is wise to take notice of the facts of nature, and wise it is beyond debate, how egregious and astounding the folly of ignoring the greatest of all facts—the presence of the all-creating, all-sustaining God? 2. Because it is obligatory. Who is He that is present with us? Our Maker, Sustainer, Proprietor, Author of all we have and are, and of all we hope to possess and be. To disregard the presence of such a Being is a heinous crime, a crime which in all worlds conscience condemns. 3. Because it is necessary. It is indispensable to man's well-being. You may as well endeavour to evolve and bring into perfection the seed the husbandman has scattered over his tilled field without the sunbeam, as to talk about educating the soul without the consciousness of God. This alone can quicken and develop the spiritual faculties of man. Nor is there any moral power without it. It is only as we feel that God is with us that power comes to resist the evil and do the good, to brave peril and face death. II. A FELLOWSHIP WITH THE DIVINE. Concerning the "mercy seat," before which the high priest stood in the Holy of Holies in the presence of God, Jehovah said to Moses, "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat," &c. It might be asked, how can we hold fellowship

with One who is invisible—how does soul hold fellowship with soul? Human spirits are invisible to each other, yet do they not enjoy fellowship? How? By symbols and sayings, works and words. I hold fellowship with the distant and the dead through the works of their hands, either as they come directly under my eye or are reproduced in my memory. But words are the media of fellowship as well as works. Through words we pour our souls into another's and our minds meet and mingle in fellowship. Can we not thus hold fellowship with God? Around, above, and beneath me, His works are spread. All I see in nature are the embodiment and revelation of His ideas, and these ideas He intends me to study and appropriate. His Word, too, is in my hand; above all I have that wonderful Word of His—the life of Jesus. This is the great organ by which He communicates His ideas to me. But can man receive the communication? Has he a capacity for it? He has. This is the glory of his nature. Of all the creatures on this earth man alone is able to receive the thoughts of God. Beyond all this—beyond what may be called the fellowship arising from interpretable ideas, there is an unspeakable and mystic intercourse. What devout soul in the chamber of devotion, the services of the temple, or in some lonely walk amidst the grand sceneries of nature, has not felt a softening, hallowing influence that has lifted his soul into the conscious presence of his God, caused it to exclaim with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place"? III. A DEVOTION TO THE DIVINE. The priests under the law were consecrated in the most solemn and impressive manner to the service of God. They were in an especial sense God's servants. 1. To offer sacrifices for themselves. We must offer ourselves, nothing else will do. Whatever we present to God, unless we have first offered ourselves, will be worse than worthless; it will be impious. The priests were set apart—2. To offer sacrifices for others. True priesthood involves intercession. All souls are united by many a subtle bond; "no one liveth unto himself," and each is bound to seek the good of others. Intercession with God on behalf of others is a social instinct as well as a religious duty and high spiritual privilege. He who first consecrates himself is sure to mediate for the redemption of others: mediate not merely by presenting the needs of men to God, but by presenting the claims of God to man. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 7–15. When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed.—*Satan loosed*:—Notice what immediately follows this thousand years. 1. The devil is let loose. He who lets him loose is, of course, the same who bound him, and sealed him in the prison of the abyss. It seems like a great pity, after the world has rested for a thousand years, that this arch-enemy of its peace should again be let loose upon it. But there seems to be some sort of necessity for it. The statement to John was, that "he must be loosed a little time" (ver. 3). Some interest of righteousness and moral government renders it proper that he should be allowed this last limited freedom. If for nothing else, it is not unimportant that he should have this opportunity to prove how little an imprisonment of a thousand years had served to change him, or reform his malignity. 2. He seduces Gog and Magog into rebellion. He does not send forth this time to "the kings of the earth," for there are then no mortal kings to be led astray, but he goes direct to the people, insinuates his malice against the rule under which the King of kings has placed the nations, and seeks to persuade them into an attempt to overthrow it. To those who dwell in the outskirts and darker places of the earth, he wends his sullen way. Who Gog and Magog are we may not be able to tell. But the allusion to the "corners of the earth" as the regions whence these rebels come, sufficiently indicates that they are among the hindermost of peoples and the least advanced and cultured among the millennial nations. Satan succeeds in rendering them dissatisfied with the holy rule of God's glorified saints, and induces them to believe that they can successfully throw it off and crush it out, as the deluded kings under the Antichrist were persuaded a thousand years before. 3. A terrible disaster ensues. A madder thing than Gog and Magog's attempt was never undertaken upon earth. It is simply a march into the jaws of death, for no rebellion against the kings who then hold the reins of government can be tolerated. The insane war is quickly terminated. "There came down fire out of heaven and devoured them." Not a man of them escapes. 4. Satan meets his final perdition. He was imprisoned in the abyss before; but he is now "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the Beast and the False Prophet [are]." (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Satan loosed from his prison after the thousand years*:—During the millennial period on earth, while the departed saints are living and reigning with Christ, evil will be subdued and restrained, but by no means will it be extinct. Had it been extinct it

could not have broken out again, nor would there be any need for the *παρεμβολή* of the saints. The new uprising of evil after the thousand years' rest is certainly not what we should expect or desire. But doubtless there is a Divine reason for permitting it so to be, or it would not be. Let us look at this matter closely in the light of God's Word, and maybe we shall find more to instruct us on this theme than at first sight appears probable. I. WE GATHER FROM THIS PASSAGE SOME HINTS AS TO THE STATE OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH DURING THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD. 1. There is no reason to doubt that the millennium, owing to the effective restraint then put upon evil through the Word of truth and the power of God, will be a period of very great blessedness. Satan is the active agent in so much evil, and when he is bound a large proportion of evil will cease to exist, and a far more rapid diffusion of good will be the blessed result. 2. There is no reason whatever to suppose, from any of the teaching of Scripture, that our Lord Jesus Christ will then be present on the earth in any other way than in the power of His Spirit. 3. It is equally clear that the millennium will not be a period of unmixed good, nor will it be a time when the saints can dispense with the *παρεμβολή*. Compared with things as they are now, the earth will be at rest; but it will not be heaven. Evil will be subdued, but far from extinct. The possibility of an outbreak will exist still. 4. There will also still be death in the world. The deathless state enters not in till the new heavens and the new earth appear, and Paradise is regained. Not till then will there be "no more curse." 5. The Church will still have to be prepared for war. Obviously, if the state of things on earth during the millennium were one of universal righteousness, there would be no nations to be deceived. Still less can we suppose that, after the resurrection from the dead, the glorified saints are to go about, sword in hand, to the holy war. II. WHAT DO WE GATHER FROM SCRIPTURE CONCERNING THIS ONSET OF ILL AFTER THE MILLENNIUM? 1. It is necessary. There is a little word in the third verse of this chapter of which we are too apt to lose sight. It is the word "must." "After that, he must be loosed a little season." Must! Why? We are not told. 2. It will be a fierce onset. It will be after the old kind, by "deception" (ver. 8). What will be the special form of deceit he will use we are not told, and conjecture is useless. 3. It will be a restricted struggle. Satan will be bound by time even when loosed as to space. The same hand that bound retains its power even when the evil one is loosed. Not even at the worst of times is the world given over to the devil. 4. It will be for a little season. Not only restricted, but within very narrow limits. The conflict may be sharp, but it will be short. 5. It will be suicidal. Satan will overshoot the mark, and fall into his own snare. 6. The struggle will be even serviceable to the Church; for not only will it reveal more and more the majesty of God in defending His own cause, but it will end in the hurling of Satan to a lower depth than before. In chap. xii. 9 we read that the devil was cast down to earth. In chap. xx. 3 he is cast into the abyss. But in ver. 10 he is cast into the lake of fire. Hence—7. The struggle will be—the last. If the reader has followed the plan of the book, he will have noted how one after another of the foes of God and man are destroyed. They were four. (1) The dragon—Satan. (2) The beast. (3) The false prophet. (4) Babylon the great. III. WHAT ARE THE RELATED TRUTHS TO WHICH THIS PASSAGE POINTS US? 1. In the light of the views of the millennium and of what is to follow, two sets of apparently conflicting passages fall into place. There is one set which indicates that, as the result of the first coming of Christ, all the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord; there is another set which indicates that there will be a fierce outbreak of evil before our Lord shall come. It is no small confirmation of the correctness of an interpretation of this passage if thereby apparently conflicting statements fall in place. The binding of Satan, which was and is effected through our Lord Jesus Christ, has become more and more stringent as souls are plucked from his grasp; and we are to see a time of peace and calm when he will be even more completely bound than he is now. But after that there is to be the new onrush of evil, so that before our Lord shall come a fiercer conflict than has ever been known will be fought, ere the great struggle shall be completely at an end, and then the Lord shall come. 2. We see that there are two ways in which evil is being dealt with. That of removal, when souls are being renewed; and that of restraint, when evil beings are kept with prescribed limits. And both these ways of working are going on now, and will do during this millennial age. 3. Be it ours to take heart as we get a fresh glimpse of the Divine plan, viz., that however oft the conflict with evil and the evil one may be renewed, yet in every case the issue is that of the defeat of evil, and its banishment to a lower depth of disgrace than before. "Who hath ever hardened himself against God and prospered?" 4. Finally, what God will ultimately do with evil and the evil one, no one can positively say. (C.

Clemance, D.D.) The age of moral reaction:—I. THE REACTION IS BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE MANNER IN WHICH MANKIND HAVE EVER DEGENERATED. 1. Here is deception. Hell and heaven are acting on our world through thoughts—the one through the false, and the other through the true. 2. Here is deception employed by Satan. "He hath blinded the minds of men." 3. Here is deception employed by Satan, first upon those who are most assailable, and afterwards through them upon others. II. THE REACTION IS OF A CHARACTER THE MOST THREATENING. 1. The vast number of its agents. 2. The anti-Christian aim of its agents. They made efforts to assault the most central and vital part of religion. III. THE REACTION TERMINATES IN THE EVER-LASTING DESTRUCTION OF ALL ITS AGENTS. 1. There is in the universe a distinct local scene, where the wicked of all classes are to receive their righteous retribution. 2. The retribution which the wicked will endure in this scene will be of a most terrible description. "Fire" is the emblem of suffering (Zech. xiii. 9; 1 Cor. iii. 13–15; 1 Pet. i. 7); "brimstone" is the emblem of desolation (Job xviii. 15). (D. Thomas, D.D.)

Compassed the camp of the saints about.—The saints compassed by evil:—1. Whereas it is said that they compassed the camp of the saints about, we see that the saints and Church of Christ is still, and ever hath been, and shall be to the end, the butt of Satan's malice, whereof she needs not to expect either intermission or mitigation. 2. We see the extremity that she may by God's permission be brought unto, to be compassed about on all sides without any outlet, as Israel was coming out of Egypt, or that boat wherein Christ was (Matt. viii.); yet the Lord will never fail her, but her extremity will be seen to be His opportunity. 3. Whereas the Church is called the beloved city, this is a cordial to all the truly godly, that whatever their estate be here, hated of the world and persecuted, yet they are beloved of God, and shall be preserved by Him. 4. Whereas it is said that fire came down from heaven and devoured them, we see that full and final destruction at last shall be the end of all God's enemies. (Wm. Guild, D.D.)

Vers. 11–15. I saw a great white throne.—The age of retribution:—I. THIS RETRIBUTIVE PERIOD WILL DAWN WITH OVERPOWERING SPLENDOR UPON THE WORLD. 1. The character of this manifestation. A "throne" is an emblem of glory. This is a "white throne." There is not a single stain upon it. It is a "great white throne." Great in its occupant: He filleth all in all. Great in its influence: toward it the eyes of all intelligences are directed; to it all beings are amenable; from it all laws that determine the character and regulate the destiny of all creatures, proceed. 2. The effect of this manifestation. Before its refulgence this material universe could not stand: it melted—vanished away. It will pass away, perhaps, as the orbs of night pass away in the high noontide of the sun: they are still in being, still in their orbits, and still move on as ever; but they are lost to us by reason of a "glory that excelleth." II. THIS RETRIBUTIVE PERIOD WILL WITNESS THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND THE CONSEQUENT DESTRUCTION OF HADES AND THE GRAVE. 1. In the resurrection there will be a connection between man's raised and man's mortal body. (1) The one rises out of the other. (2) The one retains the same plan, or outline, as the other. (3) The one fulfils the same functions as the other. 2. The resurrection will be co-extensive with the mortality of mankind. Not an infant too young, nor a patriarch too old. Tyrants and their slaves, sages and their pupils, ministers and their people—all will appear. III. THIS RETRIBUTIVE PERIOD WILL BRING HUMANITY INTO CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD. 1. There will be no atheism after this. 2. No deism. 3. No indifferentism. IV. THIS RETRIBUTIVE PERIOD WILL SETTLE FOR EVER THE QUESTION OF EVERY MAN'S CHARACTER AND DESTINY. 1. The worth of a man's character will be determined by his works. 2. A man's works will be determined by recognised authorities. God's moral and remedial laws are "books," and they will now be opened—to memory, to conscience, and to the universe. 3. According to the correspondence, or non-correspondence, of man's works with these recognised authorities will be his final destiny. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

The great white throne:—I. A THRONE. Yes, a royal seat, a seat of judgment, the seat of the great King and Judge of all. II. A GREAT THRONE. All earth's thrones have been little, even the greatest—Nebuchadnezzar, or Alexander, or Cæsar, or Napoleon; but this is "great"; greater than the greatest; none like it in magnificence. III. A WHITE THRONE. White is purity, truth, justice, calmness. Such is the throne to be—unsoiled, untainted, incorruptible; no one-sidedness nor imperfection; no bribery nor favour there. All is "white"—transparent and spotless perfection. IV. ONE SEATED ON IT. It was not empty or unoccupied, nor filled by a usurper, or by one

who could not wield the power required for executing its decrees. God was seated there; that very God before whose face heaven and earth flee away; that God whose presence melts the mountains, and made Sinai to shake (Psa. cii. 26; Isa. xxxvi. 4, li. 6; Jer. iv. 23, 26; Rev. vi. 14, xvi. 20). How terrible to stand unready before such a Judge and such a throne! All justice, all perfection, all holiness! Who can abide His appearing? But besides the Judge and the throne, there are the millions to be judged. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The great white throne*:—I. WHEN

ONCE THE GREAT WHITE THRONE IS ERECTED, ALL DISTINCTIONS OF THIS LIFE WILL HAVE BEEN FOR EVER ABOLISHED. We often marvel at the contrast exhibited in the present life, between the circumstances or conditions in which mankind are placed. From the extreme of affluence to the extreme of destitution there are endless varieties of condition, yet, in certain respects, all are equal; the noble and the mean; the richest and the poorest. Surely it ought to make the wealthy set loose to their riches, and the poor think lightly of their poverty, when it is remembered how soon the small and the great will stand alike before God, to be judged according, not to their respective conditions on earth, but each according to his works. II. The next feature which calls for notice is THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS.

The idea is that of a faithful register to be brought forward hereafter, to decide the everlasting portion. Thus, when we hear of the books to be opened at the judgment, and of men being judged out of those things which are written in the books, we are, in effect, reminded that the actions which we day by day commit, the very words we speak and the thoughts we indulge, contribute the materials for a final reckoning, upon the issue of which will be suspended eternal joy or eternal shame. This regard to the inevitable connection between conduct in this life and our portion in eternity, would serve alike to restrain from iniquity and impel to obedience.

III. It must not be overlooked, however, that while mention is made of books—of several volumes of account—out of which the dead will be judged, ALLUSION IS MADE TO BUT ONE BOOK OF LIFE, containing the names of those who would be saved. Possibly an intimation is hereby conveyed as to the comparative fewness of the saved. Yet another interpretation of the difference is, that, whereas there are many different methods by which men may go to perdition, there is but one way of life. It is not alone the heathen, who never heard of a Redeemer; nor the infidel, who professed to disbelieve the existence of God or a revelation; nor the heretic, who corrupted the truth and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; not alone the scoffer, the profligate, the profane, who will be excluded from heaven; but the impenitent, the unbelieving, the unconverted, the ungodly—all who have refused to lay hold of the salvation which is offered in the gospel. III. THE DEAD,

UNIVERSALLY, ARE SAID TO BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS. This accords with the representation given in other parts of the Bible. The reward is of grace; the judgment is according to things done in the body. IV. THE ISSUE OF THE JUDGMENT, AS DESCRIBED IN THE CLOSING VERSE OF THE CHAPTER. No sooner has the evangelist spoken of the judgment itself, than he tells us of the extinction, thenceforward, of death and of hell. There will be no more slumber in the grave. Up to this period the wicked will not have entered upon the full consummation of misery. The soul is not the man. The soul, in union with the body, constitutes the nature, which Christ redeemed, and which must, hereafter, partake of punishment or reward. Hence the complete wretchedness will not overtake the wicked till the final abolition of death and the grave. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." This will be the consummation of the ruin of the ungodly. From this doom there will be no appeal; from this sentence no relieve. We can be earnest for time; who, comparatively, is earnest for eternity? The book is still open. Christ is willing to write your name there. (*Bp. R. Bickersteth.*) *The great white throne*:—I. WHAT JOHN SAW. When the eagle-eyed seer of Patmos, being in the Spirit, looked aloft into the heavens, he saw a throne, from which I gather there is a throne of moral government over the sons of men, and that He who sits upon it presides over all the inhabitants of this world. There is a lawgiver who looks down and spies every action of man, and who does not suffer one single word or deed to be omitted from His note-book. Now we know that this moral governor is God Himself, who has an undisputed right to reign and rule. Some thrones have no right to be, and to revolt from them is patriotism; but the best lover of his race delights the most in the monarchy of heaven. In addition to this, His throne is one from the power of which none can escape. The sapphire throne of God, at this moment, is revealed in heaven, where adoring angels cast their crowns before it; and its power is felt on earth, where the

works of creation praise the Lord. Even those who acknowledge not the Divine government are compelled to feel it, for He doeth as He wills, not only among the angels in heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world. See, then, at the very outset how this throne should awe our minds with terror. Founded in right, sustained by might, and universal in its dominion, look ye and see the throne which John of old beheld. This, however, is but the beginning of the vision. The text tells us that it was a "white throne." Does not this indicate its immaculate purity? There is no other white throne, I fear, to be found. Why, then, is it white for purity? Is it not because the King who sits on it is pure? Hark to the thrice sacred hymn of the cherubic band and the seraphic choir, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Creatures who are perfectly spotless themselves unceasingly adore the yet superior holiness of the great King. Oh fairest of all thrones! who would not be a willing subject of Thy peerless government? Moreover, the throne is pure, because the law the Judge dispenses is perfect. There is no fault in the statute-book of God. When the Lord shall come to judge the earth, there will be found no decree that bears too hardly upon any one of His creatures. "The statutes of the Lord are right"; they are true and righteous altogether. I have thought, too, that perhaps this throne is said to be a white throne to indicate that it will be eminently conspicuous. You will have noticed that a white object can be seen from a very great distance. We must see it; it shall be so striking a sight that none of us will be able to prevent its coming before us; "every eye shall see Him." Possibly it is called a white throne because of its being such a convincing contrast to all the colours of this sinful human life. There stand the crowd, and there is the great white throne. What can make them see their blackness more thoroughly than to stand there in contrast with the perfections of the law and the Judge before whom they are standing? Perhaps that throne, all glistening, will reflect each man's character. The next word that is used by way of adjective is "great." It was a "great white throne." You scarcely need me to tell you that it is called a great white throne because of the greatness of Him who sits upon it. Speak of the greatness of Solomon? He was but a petty prince. Speak of the thrones of Rome and Greece before which multitudes of beings assembled? They are nothing, mere representatives of associations of the grasshoppers of the world, who are as nothing in the sight of the Lord Jehovah. A throne filled by a mortal is but a shadow of dominion. This will be a great throne because on it will sit the great God of earth and heaven and hell, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who shall judge the world in righteousness, and His people with equity. You will see that this will be a "great white throne" when we remember the culprits who will be brought before it; not a handful of criminals, but millions upon millions; and these not all of the lesser sort, not serfs and slaves alone whose miserable bodies rested from their oppressors in the silent grave; but the great ones of the earth shall be there; not one missing. It will be a great white throne, because of the matters that will be tried there. It will be no mere quarrel about a suit in Chancery, or an estate in jeopardy. Our souls will have to be tried there; our future, not for an age, not for one single century, but for ever and for ever. Turn not away your eyes from the magnificent spectacle till you have seen the glorious Person mentioned in the words, "And Him that sat on it." The most fitting One in all the world will sit upon that throne. It will be God, but hearken, it will also be man. The Christ whom you despised will judge you, the Saviour whose mercy you trampled on—it is He who shall judge righteous judgment to you, and what will He say but this—"As for these Mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, cut them in pieces before My eyes!" II.

THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM SUCH A SIGHT AS THIS. 1. Let me search myself. 2. Having spoken a word to the Christian, I should like to say to every one of you, in remembrance of this great white throne shun hypocrisy. 3. But there are some of you who say, "I do not make any profession of religion." Still my text has a word to you. Still I want you to judge your actions by that last great day. Oh sir, how about that night of sin? "No," say you, "never mind it; bring it not to my remembrance." It shall be brought to thy remembrance, and that deed of sin shall be published far wider than upon the house-tops. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The great white throne, the opened books, and the assembled dead:—*

I. THE SUPREME TRIBUNAL: "A great white throne." It is a new wonder. St. John saw other thrones in more than one apocalyptic disclosure, but none like this. It is unique and transcendent. It is "great." It represents Divine majesty. It is "white." Its intolerable splendour is without a stain. It is not a

throne of grace. To it no penitents are welcomed. None could bow before it. No clemency is published and no forgiveness dispensed. It is the supreme and final tribunal. From the decisions of this bar there is no appeal. The sentences of the King are irreversible. II. THE INTOLERABLE PURITY OF THE JUDGE: "Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." Descriptions may be indefinite from the lack of graphic ability in the narrator, or from the impossibility of seizing and reporting the transcendent and stupendous objects which he has to record. Not a single minute particular is given in St. John's outline of the dread vision. All that we are told of the throne is, that it is vast, and dazzling in its whiteness. "Him that sat upon" the throne; but not a syllable is there about that sight. Of that face—its majesty, brightness, terror—St. John could utter nothing; but he has recorded what followed its unveiling. Earth and heaven, as conscious and guilty things, fled away—just as the stars retreat and disappear when the sun darts forth at break of day, or rather as tow and gossamer fly and vanish when touched by the flame. The face from which all nature shrank into instantaneous invisibility, and could discover no space to hide in, was incapable of description. III. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DREAD ASSIZE: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Earth and heaven were permitted to vanish from the face, the splendour and purity of which they could not endure. Not so men. The guiltiest, though the heart shrink, must encounter the sight and hear the sentence. St. John "saw the earth and heaven fly"; but "the dead, small and great, stand," stand "before the throne," and await their doom. IV. THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE SOLEMN AWARDS. The prominent truth in the vision is, He will "judge the people righteously." "According to their works," as good or evil, holy or unholy, the sentence will be given. Faith in the blood of atonement, without a life of reverence, virtue, love of God, self-sacrifice, and Christ-like nobleness, is the pretence of hypocrites and traitors. "According to their works," St. John saw "every man judged." V. GREAT AND APPROACHING CHANGES IN THE SEEN AND UNSEEN WORLDS: "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." We cannot understand this statement without recalling the peculiarities of our present life. To the righteous now there exist the earth and the unseen heaven. After the judgment the distinction between the earth where we are and heaven where God is, will be abolished. The earth and the visible skies are to depart; the unseen heaven will alone remain. Resembling changes await the wicked. The bodies of the unrighteous are in the graves of this planet. Their souls are in Hades awaiting judgment. The scene of retribution is a future and unseen world. After judgment, the earth and the grave will be no more. Hades—the unseen world of spirits—will be similarly abrogated. Death and Hades, and all which they represent, will merge in retribution, of which the lake of fire is the symbol. (*H. Batchelor.*) *The great white throne*:—"I saw a throne." There is a throne now, but men do not see it. There is a real government now, but it will be a visible one then. You know the sceptic has doubts, because he cannot see. He says, "Where is God, and where is the throne? I have never seen it." Did you ever see the throne of England? I never did—but you know there is one; you know there is a government. I never saw the Queen, and I dare say many of you have not seen her, but you know there is a Queen. I never saw the great King, but He is here. He reigns; and by and by His throne will become visible, and faith and doubt will be lost in sight, and the believer will say, "It is He"; and the infidel will say, "It is He"; and there will be no more doubting and no more believing—it will be sight. "I saw a throne." It is called a "great" throne. "I saw a great white throne." Now, of all the seats in the world, I believe thrones are the filthiest. I believe the throne of England to be one of the purest in the world; but that throne has oftentimes been stained with the blood that tyrants have shed. But that is the "great white throne." Many a time darkness has dimmed it round, for "clouds and darkness are round about him"; it has been veiled in mystery; but behind the cloud it was a white throne—a throne that never was tarnished by injustice, and that never was defiled by wrong-doing. The infidel and the doubter have often had hard thoughts of God; but when the throne is set it will be seen to be without a stain. "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it." It is the Man of Calvary; it is the Babe of Bethlehem—but, oh, how changed! See His eyes piercing and flashing—pictures of His penetrating wisdom. See His feet that have the glow of the furnace, that outshine the sun in its glory. And then hear His voice. It is louder than the choruses of nature. It is "as the voice of many

waters." And as He says, "Rise, ye dead," they come forth at His bidding. Oh, when that day comes, may you find that the blessed One who sits upon the throne is your friend. A minister was one day travelling with a young spark, a sceptical fellow; and as the manner of such men is, and probably liking a little to annoy the person with whom he was travelling, he said, among other things, "Talk about the Bible being an inspired book! why, I tell you, those books of the old pagans were far better; it is not fit to be named in the same day of the week with Homer." "Well," said the minister, calmly, "since you seem to be so great an admirer of Homer, would you give me a specimen—some favourite passage from your beloved author?" "In a minute," said the young man, "I will"; and very readily he pointed to what he thought a fair specimen of the sublimity and power of Homer, where he speaks in these words—

"Jove frowned and darkened half the sky."

"Now, there, sir," said he, "just think of the sublimity of that figure—the very frown of the god darkened half the face of nature." "I grant," said he, "you have selected with very good taste; but before you venture to pit your favourite author against the inspired Word of God, read it a little more. What do you say to this: 'I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away'? How much less sublime what you have repeated from Homer is than that!" The young man was silent. I hope he learned never again to pit any book against the Book of God. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it." Now, those of you that are at all acquainted with the opinions of the people that lived when the Apostle John wrote, will know that it was thought among the most impossible of things that anybody should ever be recovered that was lost in the waters. Hence, in the *Odyssey* you will find that when Ulysses was in peril of drowning he moaned that he had not fallen in the fight before the walls of Troy, for he speaks of himself as sinking in the waters, and so being for ever dead. And it was a great opinion that all who had not sepulchral rites could never have peace or happiness after; the body they never dreamed could rise, but even the spirit they thought was destroyed. Blessed be God, we have a better view than that. How many of the bravest of Britain's sons and the fairest of her daughters have gone forth and have gone down with the storm for their requiem, the wreck for their coffin, and the waters for their winding-sheet. There they are. Though you do not know where they are lying, Jesus knows; and when the last trump is heard they will come forth. And not only so, but "death and hell shall give up the dead that are in them." This is a noble personification. Death and hell are the twin giants that rule the grave and the spirit-world. What a blessed thing it is that both will be conquered! When the trumpet is blown, the dust in the charnel will begin to stir and creep and quiver, and bone will come to his bone, and the frame will be built up again. And when the trumpet is blown, it will be heard in the highest heaven, and the blessed spirits will come down, and it will be heard in the deepest pit, and the lost souls will come up, and there, by some wondrous appointment, body and soul will be remarried never to be divorced for ever. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." I saw them—small and great—the man of wealth and the man of rank, the prince and the man of poverty. What a mighty host will that be! You and I will be among the number. Then there is another thing. "The books were opened." Now what are these books? 1. First of all, there will be the books of God's requirements. Where are these books? There are many. First, God's requirements as they are written in nature. The poor pagan has had that book, that book whose syllables are constellations and whose letters are stars. The firmament has declared the being and power of God, and the dew of heaven and the flowers of nature have shown His goodness. There is enough in nature to make a man feel after God, if haply he may find Him; and the heathen have had that. 2. Then there will also be that book of moral conscience which God puts into a man; and He has written something on the page of every heart. You may, if you like, try to be irresponsible, but there is something within that won't let you feel like that. When Pericles once kept one of his friends waiting, when at last he got in he said, "Pericles, why was I kept waiting so long?" He said, "I was preparing the accounts for the citizens." "Why take so much trouble?" said his friend; "why not declare yourself irresponsible?" Well, now, that is just what many silly infidels of this day say. They cannot get their accounts quite clear for

the throne, but I tell you what they do—they declare that they are not responsible, that they are conquered by circumstances, and cannot help whatever they may be. Will that do? God will open the book of conscience, and He will judge you, and your own conscience will attest that God is true. 3. Well, then, there is the book of inspiration. Every sceptic in this land will be judged by this book. Your not believing it is no reason; if you do not believe it, you ought. 4. Well, the book of God's providence will be opened, and God will be justified in that day. You know sometimes His providence seems dark, and we are sometimes inclined to grumble, and say this is wrong and that is wrong; but when that day comes, it will all be open, and we shall say, "It is all right," and even the sinner will be obliged to bow his head and say, "It is all just." 5. And there is another book—the book of God's remembrance. It is a beautiful figure that represents the Divine knowledge as the book of God's remembrance. That book will be opened, and your very secret sins will all be there. 6. Ay, and then the book of memory will be opened. There are some strange facts that now and then transpire with respect to human memory. I do not believe when a thing has once been in your mind you ever really lose it again. I cannot understand it at all, but I could tell you fact after fact about it. I remember coming home from an appointment one very dark night, and there came on a storm, and by and by the lightning flashed out, and for an infinitesimal portion of time I could see everything. There I saw the church steeple, which might be a mile off, as plainly as could be, and the whole of the landscape, in that infinitesimal portion of time. Have you never had it like that in your memory? I believe there is a key somewhere that would unlock everything you ever did, and bring it up before your mind. Now, when the books are opened, the book of memory will be opened, and there will come flashing up pictures of all sorts of things you did; and I tell you, if you do not get sin washed away by the blood of Christ, there is nothing for you but horrors—horrors for ever. (S. Coley.)

I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.—The last judgment:—When Massillon pronounced one of those discourses which have placed him in the first class of orators, he found himself surrounded by the trappings and pageants of a royal funeral. The temple was not only hung with sable, but shadowed with darkness, save the few twinkling lights of the altar. The beauty and the chivalry of the land were spread out before him. There sat Majesty, clothed in sackcloth and sunk in grief. All felt in common, and as one. A sense of the indescribable nothingness of man "at his best estate," of the meanness of the highest human grandeur, now made plain in the spectacle of that hearsed mortal, overcame him. His eye once more closed; his action was suspended; and, in a scarcely audible whisper, he broke the long-drawn pause—"There is nothing great, but God." I take the sublimely affecting sentence and mould it to the present theme—There is nothing solemn but judgment. The thunderstorm is solemn: when the lightnings, "as arrows, shoot abroad." But what is it to that far-resounding crash, louder than the roar and bellow of ten thousand thunders, which shall pierce the deepest channels, and which all the dead shall hear? The ocean-tempest is solemn: when those huge billows lift up their crests; when mighty armaments are wrecked by their fury. But what is it to that commotion of the deep, when "its proud waves" shall no more "be stayed," its ancient barriers no more be observed, the largest channels be emptied, and the deepest abyss be dried? The earthquake is solemn: when, without a warning, cities totter, and kingdoms rend, and islands flee away. But what is it to that tremour which shall convulse our globe, dissolving every law of attraction, severing every principle of aggregation, heaving all into chaos and heaping all into ruin? Great God! must our eyes see—our ears hear—these desolations and distractions? Must we look forth upon these devouring flames? Must we stand in judgment with Thee? Penetrate us now with Thy fear; awaken the attention, which Thy trump shall not fail to command; surround our imagination with the scenery of that great and terrible day! I. LET US CONSIDER THE SCENERY WHICH SHALL ILLUSTRATE THIS AUGUST ASSIZE. The "throne" is the emblem of royal dignity. It is the symbol of Divine supremacy. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all." It is "a great white throne." It is vast, shadowy, undefined. No rainbow of the covenant girdles it; no suppliants or penitents sue before it; no pardons are issued from it. It is a tribunal throne. "He hath prepared His throne for judgment." It is occupied. There is One, that "sitteth upon it." This is often characteristic and distinctive of the Father. There is no manner of similitude. Nothing at first appears to guide us in the present discrimination. There is no form. It seems

essential, and not distinguished, deity. But need we be at loss? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." He now "thinketh it no robbery to be equal with God," and as God He is "Judge Himself." "From the face" of Him who sitteth upon the throne, "the earth and the heaven flee away." Who can think of that countenance and not associate with it pensive downcast, deepest affliction, sweetest meekness? Into what expressions must that countenance have now kindled! With what terrors must it now be clothed! Things inanimate, insensible, smitten with a strange panic and with a sudden dismay, start back; and those refulgent heavens and this fair earth shrink into ancient disorder and anarchy: they rush into primeval chaos and night. But not so can the sinner "flee away"; rocks—mountains—cannot cover him; there is no hiding-place for "the workers of iniquity." It makes little difference whether it be the greater catastrophe or the inferior; the larger could not strike a deeper terror—the smaller could not induce a less. And why do heaven and earth pass away? and why is no more place found for them? They have realised their end. They were but as the scaffolding; the erection is complete. They are of no further use. They may be set aside. "The mystery of God" is "finished." There is "the consummation." Time, therefore, need "be no longer." II. WE NOW, THEN, TURN TO THE MULTITUDE THAT SHALL BE SUMMONED TO THIS JUDGMENT. "Death delivered up the dead which were in it." This is the power of the grave, it is the personification of death. He who burst the barriers of the tomb and made death bow before Him—He shall send forth His mandate, publish His behest; and then the vaults and the catacombs and the mummy pits and the bone-houses shall disgorge their relics. It was much for the sea to obey Him who sitteth on the throne; it was more for inexorable death—the grave—the sepulchre—to yield its victims; but "hell"—the place of departed spirits, where the disembodied soul of man is to be found, whether in happiness or in woe—hades has listened to a voice until then unknown to it. The gates of "the shadow of death" unbar, and its portals fly open. And now there come—there come—there come—clouds of spirits rolling upon clouds, in swift succession, with impetuous rush; sumless, but unmixed, but individualised; the consciousness of each distinct, the character of each defined, the memory of each unobliterated, and the sentence of each foredoomed. And hades sends back spirits to those bodies, which the sea and the grave may no more retain. "The small and the great stand before God." All who have been among the mighty, and would not "let go their prisoners," and who "destroyed the earth," and all of minor state. None are so great that they can intimidate: none so little that they can escape. And thinking of that mighty throng, there is a distinctive circumstance which must not be overlooked: "every man was judged." God can say, "All souls are Mine"; and all souls, on that day, shall pass in review before Him. Each of your "idle words," each of your "vain thoughts," each of your impure desires, every bias of your spirit, every movement of your heart must reappear. "Be sure your sin will find you out." III. LET US CONSIDER THE PROCESS WHICH MUST DETERMINE THIS JUDGMENT. When Hilkiah found the law, and read it to the people, they rent their clothes, terror-struck, that they had committed so many offences against a long-forgotten law. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "He is the God of judgment." "He is the God of truth." "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth." But then that book, which is closed to so many, shall "be opened"—shall be opened in all its injunctions, all its penalties, all its sanctions. You will not then think that its bands are small; you will not then think that its terrors are weak. If the law, by one drop of its present fury, one flash of its present power, causes the stoutest heart and the most rebel conscience to quail, how will the stoutest heart be as tow in the fire, and the most rebel conscience be as wax before the flame, when this book shall be opened!—shall be opened in all its contents, shall be opened in all its principles, shall be opened in all its awards! But these "books" may refer to the discoveries of the gospel. And these might indeed cheer, and these ought indeed to fortify, if you have "won Christ and are found in Him." Yet if you are unbelievers still, if you are "enemies in your minds by wicked works," this book, the word of reconciliation, is more portentous in its aspect against you, even than the volume of the law. You will be judged "according to this gospel." All the beseechings of mercy, all the remonstrances of authority, all the pleadings of tenderness! This book shall be opened only the more terribly to convict and to condemn. Mercy will in that day be more terrible than justice. (*R. W. Hamilton, D.D.*) *The last judgment*:—I. THE MAJESTY OF THE TRIBUNAL. II. THE PERSON OF THIS JUDGE.

Here is justice, we may say, here is retribution, in the very commencement of this judgment, the very constitution of this court—the once abased but now exalted—openly exalted—Jesus, is receiving from His Father a compensation for all His former degradation and shame. III. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WHOLE MATERIAL WORLD. What is a man advantaged if he gain the whole of such a world as this? The world would be a poor thing to make our portion, even if it were destined to last for ever, but we shall be alive ages and ages after it has perished; and if the world is our all, where then will our happiness be? where will our comfort and support be? IV. THE STRANGE, VAST ASSEMBLY GATHERED TOGETHER IN IT. V. THE PROCESS OF THIS JUDGMENT. 1. Its exactness. "The books were opened." "The books were opened"—the book of God's law; the law of His universe, which every creature is bound by his very existence in His universe to obey. The book of His gospel—a book superadded in man's case to the book of the law, and as binding on man when made known to him as the law itself. And then there is a book to be opened within us, the book of memory and conscience. There are few of us who have not at intervals been surprised at the power of these two faculties within us; it is an indication of their future power when they are called forth in their full energy before our Judge. 2. The justice or equity of this judgment: "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books." False accusers can do nothing against us now. Friends and flatterers can do nothing for us. They will not be listened to. The books—the true and faithful books only—will be regarded, and by their testimony will our sentence be determined. 3. The wonderful grace that will be manifested by Him in this judgment. There is another book mentioned. "Another book was opened, which is the book of life." "He that believeth shall be saved," it says. "Now bring forward that book of life. It is My once secret register of all that are Mine. Open it. There stands that man's name written; I with My own hand wrote it there; and though My law condemns him, and record upon record condemns him, yet he believed in Me for salvation, and that is enough—I will never condemn him. I will not blot out his name out of that book of life, but I will confess his name, declare and proclaim it here as a name dear to Me, before My Father and before His angels." (C. Bradley, M.A.) *The great assize*:—There are three great days connected with the history of our race. 1. The day the world was made. 2. The day the world was redeemed. 3. The day the world will be judged. It is to the last of these days our text invites attention. Come forth with me and view the scene. Every prophecy is fulfilled, the last hour arrived; the funeral day of the world has come. For the first and last time are found in one great assembly every angel, every saint, and every devil. The books are opened. I. THE PRELIMINARIES OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. The day will be ushered in with sound of trumpet and the voice of God. The debaucher will be revelling in obscenity—the prodigal rioting in prodigality and wantonness—the self-righteous wrapped up in his own carnal security—the robber on his errand of sin—the whisperer slandering his neighbour—the infidel glorying in his shame—the miser counting over his gold—the soldier in the tented field—the sailor on the briny deep—the careless sitting at ease—the hypocrite practising deceit. When the shrill blast of the archangel's trump, waxing louder than ten thousand thunders, shall shake the earth, and the angel shall swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever that time shall be no more. 2. The Judge will appear. Every eye shall see Him, for like the sun He will appear equally near to all who shall be placed at His dread tribunal. All our previous ideas of grandeur will be infinitely surpassed by the realities of this solemn scene. 3. The dead shall be raised, and all created intelligences shall stand arraigned before the judgment-seat. People of every age and condition, rank and degree. Populous assemblies! Not one missing of past, present, or future generations. II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE JUDGMENT. "And the books were opened." 1. There will be the book of God's omniscience. Every thought, feeling, desire, motive, and purpose of every heart are fully recorded; and every act of every life. 2. The book of conscience. The one will be found to tally exactly with the other. Oh, trifle not with your conscience, for it will wake up in the judgment and echo the truthfulness of God's omniscience. 3. The book of life. The Divine wisdom or remembrance, whereby the Lord knoweth them that are His. III. ITS FINAL AND IRREVERSIBLE RESULTS. 1. The whole will be divided, and there shall be no mistake. Not one sinner shall stand in this vast congregation of the righteous. 2. Sentence will be pronounced. If we have not on the wedding garment, we must hear that awfully tremendous voice saying unto us, "Depart, ye

cursed." 3. Execution of the sentence. (*J. D. Carey.*) *The last judgment* :—I. THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT—a great white throne. 1. Its dignity. A throne is the seat of royalty (1 Kings x. 18, 19; Isa. vi. 1). 2. Its purity. White is an emblem of purity. As from the majesty of this throne there can be no appeal, so with respect to the equity of it there can be no just cause of complaint. II. THE AUTHOR OF JUDGMENT. 1. Who is the Judge? Jehovah in the person of Christ. The Father judgeth no man (John v. 22). 2. His qualification for His work. (1) Infinite knowledge. (2) Unspotted justice. (3) Unlimited power. III. THE SUBJECTS OF JUDGMENT. "I saw the dead, small and great," &c. 1. The appearance will be universal. 2. The appearance will be inevitable. IV. THE RULE OF JUDGMENT. Conclusion: 1. Flee to the Cross of Christ. 2. Ever associate that day with feelings of the deepest solemnity. (*J. G. Breay, B.A.*) *The last judgment* :—I. THE SUBJECTS OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. The dead, small and great. (1) Young and old. (2) Rich and poor. (3) Illiterate and learned. 2. These shall stand together before God. (1) Social distinctions are not accounted at that tribunal. (2) Ethnic distinctions cease. (3) Distinctions of time also are at an end. All generations mingle in one grand congregation. 3. The value of character will then appear. (1) When conventional, accidental distinctions vanish, the real, permanent distinctions of character come out in the boldest relief. (2) The interval of the disembodied and millennial states will afford the best opportunities for reflection upon that conduct which is now crystallised into character. (3) If anything further is needed to force home this lesson upon the spirit, here it is in the excitements of the judgment—the prodigies—the Judge—the witnesses—the impending doom. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE JUDGE. 1. Christ appears not now as Mediator. (1) Death ends probation. (2) The shadows of the great judgment are felt here in the court of conscience. Works, words, thoughts, motives, should be ever examined here in anticipation of the more imposing court. (3) The preparation of holiness we must have. 2. He now appears as King. (1) He comes "in the glory of His Father"—the glory of His Divinity. The dead "stand before God." (2) He comes in "His own glory"—the glory of His exalted and beatified manhood. Here is the only universal Monarch. "On His head are many crowns." (3) He comes with His retinue of holy angels. 3. His resources are equal to the occasion. (1) See the effect of His glance. The world kindles into conflagration (ver. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 7–12). (2) The eye of flame can discriminate as it can search. (3) What impiety can dare that throne? III. THE STANDARDS OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. The book of God's works. (1) This volume treats of His power. The forces of Nature assert His sovereignty. How has that been respected? (2) It treats also of His wisdom. The exquisite dovetailing of things, nice adjustments, wonderful adaptations, assert His adorableness. How has that been respected? (3) It treats further of His goodness. What contrivances to give pleasure to His creatures! Every voice of beneficence calls for gratitude. How have we responded? 2. The book of God's Word. (1) In this we have His law. (2) In this also we have His gospel. 3. The book of memory. (1) God's memory forgets nothing. (2) Man's memory will be prodigiously quickened. 4. The book of condemnation. (1) The names of the doomed are written there. The character of the writing is legible and black. (2) How many millions will find their names there! Is yours amongst the number? (3) What does it mean to be written there? Exclusion from heaven. 5. "And another book was opened which is the book of life." (*J. A. Macdonald.*) *The last assize* :—Though the Book of Revelation contains much that is mysterious, and even inexplicable, passages such as this are as instructive as magnificent. The delineation is that of transactions in which we must all bear a part in the last general assize. It was before the Redeemer that the mighty multitude of those whom the grave had surrendered were arraigned, the title of absolute divinity being justly assigned to Him who is evidently the Son of Man, seeing that the two natures coalesced indissolubly in His person. Our text then proceeds to give some account of the principles upon which judgment will be conducted, showing that an accurate register has been kept of human actions, and that men will be judged according to their works, and therefore judged in righteousness. We know not whether the principles of God's moral government are insisted on with sufficient frequency and urgency from our pulpits, but we are sure that they produce not their due influence on the great mass of men. Here and there, indeed, you may meet with an individual whose thoughts are set on the account which he must one day render, and whose habitual endeavour it is to preserve an habitual sense of the coming of the Lord. But even individuals such as these will confess to you that their endeavours are but

partially successful; that they have great cause of humiliation before God, on account of their forgetfulness of the day of trial. So that there can be no class of hearers to whom the subject of discourse presented by our text is not appropriate. We shall premise a few remarks on the necessity of a general judgment, in order to vindicate God's moral government, and then proceed to examine the several assertions made in our text in regard to this fact. Now, in every age of the world, men have been perplexed by what seemed opposite evidences as to the superintending care of a wise and beneficent Being. On the one hand, there is no doubt that we live under a retributive government, and that cognisance is taken of our actions by an invisible but ever-present Being whose attributes render Him the determined foe of vice and the steadfast upholder of righteousness. On the other hand, there has been an irresistible demonstration, from the experience of all ages, that no accurate proportion is at present maintained between conduct and condition, but that vice has most frequently the upper hand, while righteousness is depressed and overwhelmed. There has been no reconciling of these apparent contradictions, except by supposing that human existence would not terminate with death, but that in another, though yet unknown state, vice would receive its due meed of vengeance, and righteousness of reward. Thus you see how reason concurs with revelation in directing your thoughts to a state of retribution. We next remark that the season of judgment is not to arrive until the end of all things, when the dead shall be raised. Once admit that all men are to be put upon trial, and you also admit, so far as we can see, that their final portion is not entered upon ere that trial is past; for what could be more contrary to all show of justice than the sentencing after execution? But when men would curiously inquire into the particulars of the intermediate state, we are not at all able to answer their questions. We doubt not that the justified soul is immediately assured of its acceptance with God, and consigned to the peace and repose in the blessed certainty that heaven will be its portion. We doubt as little that the soul of him who dies in his impenitence is immediately conscious that its doom is determined, and given over to anguish and remorse because allowed no hope that lost time may be redeemed and hell yet avoided. It is the whole man, the compound of spirit and flesh, which has obeyed or transgressed; it must be therefore the whole man which is put upon trial, and which receives the portion whether of promise or threatening. Thus, whatever our thoughts of the intermediate state, we know that the allotments of eternity cannot be fully dealt out unless the vision of our text shall have been first accomplished, "and the dead, small and great, stand before their God." We pass now to the contemplation of the person of the Judge. We wish to set before you the combined wisdom and mercy of the appointment, that He who is to decide our portion for eternity, is the very Being who died as our surety. We cannot dispense with the omniscience of Deity; we see clearly enough that no finite intelligence can be adequate to that decision which will ensure the thorough justice of future retribution. But then neither can we dispense with the feelings of humanity; at least we can have no confidence in approaching His tribunal if we are sure that the difference in nature incapacitates Him from sympathy with those whose sentence He is about to pronounce, and precludes the possibility of His so making our case His own as to allow of His deciding with due allowance for our feebleness and temptations. It is thus we are assured that mercy and justice will alike have full scope in the transactions of the judgment, and that in appointing that the Mediator who died as our substitute will preside at our trial, God hath equally provided that every decision shall be impartial, and yet every man be dealt with as brother to Him who must determine our fate. It would have been an encouragement to wickedness had the Judge been mere man, and therefore liable to be deceived. It would have filled humble piety with dread had the Judge been only God, and therefore not "touched with a feeling of our infirmities." This leads us to our concluding point, the thorough righteousness of the whole procedure of the judgment. (H. Melvill, B.D.) *The judgment*:—It is related of Daniel Webster, the reality of whose moral endowments no one disputes, that when once asked what was the greatest thought that had ever occupied his mind, he replied, "The fact of my personal accountability to God." Eliminate accountability, and man drops into the category of instinct and natural desire; if he is a savage, he becomes a beast; if he is civilised, he becomes virtually a criminal. Freedom and conscience imply accountability; accountability implies rendering account, and this implies a judgment; such is the logic that covers human life, few and simple in its links, but strong as adamant and inexorable as fate. It underlies and binds together the

twofold kingdom of time and eternity—one chain, whether it binds things in heaven or things on the earth. It is the weakness of formulated theology that it arbitrarily transfers the most august and moving features of God's moral government to a future world, thus placing the wide and mysterious gulf of time and death between actions and their motives. All broken law begins at once to incur judgment; the quick pang of conscience that follows sin is the first stroke of judgment; while undergoing it the soul is passing a crisis, and turns to the right or the left hand of eternal righteousness. Thus we are all the while rendering account to the laws without and within; we are all the while undergoing judgment and receiving sentence of acquittal or condemnation. Conduct is always reaching crises and entering upon its consequences. It may be cumulative in degree, and reach crises more and more marked; it may at last reach a special crisis which shall be the judgment when the soul shall turn to the right or left of eternal destiny. A profound view of judgment as a test or crisis entailing separation, shows us that it attends change; for it is through change that the moral nature is aroused to special action. It is a law that catastrophes awaken conscience. It is also a peculiarity of the action of the moral nature under great outward changes that man is disclosed to himself. Recall the most joyful event of your lives, and you will find it to have been also a period of great self-knowledge. Recall your deepest sorrow and you will still more vividly recognise it as an experience in which there was a deep, interior measurement of yourself. If change has this revealing and judging power, the change of worlds must have it in a superlative degree. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that cometh judgment; the testing and unveiling of character and conduct. Pre-eminently, far beyond anything that has preceded, man is then judged and assigned his true place and direction. I think the central truth of the judgment can nowhere more easily be got at than in the passage before us. No other symbol than that of "books" could so vividly convey the fact that the whole life comes into judgment. Nothing is left out or forgotten; there can be no mistake. The books are the unerring transcript of the life. The simplicity of the symbol is marred by the introduction of "another book" than those recording the works. Why is there "another book which is the book of life"—and what does it mean? Mankind do not go up to the throne of God to be judged simply by their works. Parallel with humanity is the kingdom of heaven. Parallel with men's deeds are the purposes of God. Over and above what humanity does of itself is a plan of redemption, the working out of which enters into human destiny. It may be that the other book represents that other power, and the influences that flow out of the life of Christ. It is a book of life, and He is the life of the world. Men are judged by the records of their works, but it may be that the sentence pronounced is affected by what is written in the book of life. I am aware that this complicates the thought, but we must remember that the problem of spiritual destiny is not absolutely simple. But we will leave this side issue and turn to the main thought—the books out of which men are judged. The books must be found in God, or nature, or man. The mind of God must indeed be a tablet whereon are written all the works of men, but let us not touch that ineffable mystery without warrant. Science, in the person of some of its high priests, has suggested that all the deeds of men are conserved as distinct forces in the ether that fills the spaces of heaven, and may be brought together again in true form, in some new cosmos, as light traversing space as motion is turned to heat when arrested by the earth. But we can find no link between such a fact, if it be a fact, and the moral process of judgment. We must search man himself for the elements of his great account. Take the mind: at first it is merely a set of faculties, without even self-consciousness, but contact with the world brings them into action—first observation, then memory; soon the imagination spreads its folded wings; then comes the process of comparison and combination, and thus the full process of thinking is developed—a process to which there is no end, and the capacities of which are immeasurable. When we reach the limit of our own powers, we open the pages of some great master of thought, and there find new realms that reveal corresponding powers. Take the soul: there are faculties that exist only in germ till certain periods of life arise. The child knows nothing of the love that breaks in upon the youth with its rapturous pain and yearning of insatiable desire, flooding the heights of his being, but the capacity was in the child. The soft touch of a babe's hand unlocks new rooms in the heart of the mother. New relations, new stages of life, disclose new powers and reveal the mysteries of our being. We are all the while finding out new agencies in nature; even its component parts are not yet all discovered, while the forces developed by combination

are doubtless immeasurable in number and degree. Take the memory, the faculty through which the consciousness of identity is preserved. With so important a function to fulfil, it is altogether probable that its action is absolute, that is, it never forgets. We cannot understand its action, but probably we speak accurately when we say that an impression is made upon the mind. The theory that memory is a physical act, and therefore cannot outlast death, is untenable. Matter, having no real identity, cannot uphold a sense of identity, which is the real office of memory. The impression of what we do, say, hear, see, feel, and think, is stamped upon the mind. An enduring matrix receives the impression; is it probable that it is ever lost? We think we forget, but our thought is corrected by everyday experience. The mind wearied by toil forgets at night, but remembers when sleep has refreshed the body. The body forgot; the mind retained its knowledge. We forget the faces we have seen, but on the first fresh glimpse we remember them. We revisit scenes that long since had faded from memory, but the new sight uncovers the old impression. Even so slight a thing as a note of music, or a perfume, will bring up scenes long ago forgotten; a strain of music, and a face that had grown dim to memory, comes back from the dead in all its freshness. De Quincey, a profound observer upon the subject, says that when under the influence of opium, the most trifling incidents of his early life would pass again and again before his distempered vision, varying their form, but the same in substance. These incidents, which were originally somewhat painful, would swell into vast proportions of agony, and rise into the most appalling catastrophes. This was the action of a diseased nature, but it indicates what shape our lives may assume if viewed at last through the medium of a sin-diseased soul. Not only does the memory retain conduct, but all impressions upon the soul remain imbedded within it. Nothing is lost that has once happened to it. We are taking into ourselves the world about us, the society in which we move, the impress of every sympathetic contact with good or evil, and we shall carry them with us for ever. We do not pass through a world for nought—it follows us because it has become a part of us. It may be said that these impressions are so numerous and conflicting that they can yield no distinct picture hereafter. But we must not limit the capacity of the soul in this respect, in the presence of greater mysteries. In some sense, it may present, as it were, a continually fresh surface. A most apt illustration waits upon our thought drawn from the palimpsests found in the monasteries of Italy; parchments that, centuries ago, were inscribed with the history or laws of heathen Rome, the edicts of persecuting emperors, or the annals of conquest. When the Church arose, the same parchments were used again to record the legends and prayers of the saints. Later still, they were put to further use in rehearsing the speculations of the schoolmen, or the revival of letters, yet presenting but one written surface. But modern science has learned to uncover these overlaid writings one after another, finding upon one surface the speculations of learning, the prayers of the Church, and the blasphemies of paganism. And so it may be with the tablets of the soul, written over and over again, but no writing ever effaced, they wait for the master-hand that shall uncover them to be read of all. What are these apocalyptic books but records of our works printed upon our hearts? What are the books opened but man opened to himself? This is a view of the judgment that men cannot scoff at. Its elements are provided; its forces are at work; it lies within the scope of every man's knowledge. It is but the whole of what we already know in part. As there are powers in man that render judgment possible, so there are conditions on the other side that co-operate. One cannot be judged except there be one who judges. Man is judged by man; nothing else were fit. The deflections from perfect humanity cannot be measured except by the standard of perfect humanity. Hence it is the Son of Man, the humanity of God, who judges. When man meets Him, all is plain. His perfection is the test; He furnishes the contrast that repels, or the likeness that draws. This then is judgment: man revealed by the unveiling of his life, and tested by the Son of Man. (*T. T. Munger.*) *The judgment*:—I. ITS PLACE IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF. 1. It is an essential part in the creed of a Christian. 2. Its importance may be gathered from its prominence in the Scriptures. It is foretold in the Old Testament—the Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Malachi, all reveal it. Our Lord, in His parables, especially in those called “eschatological,” because of their reference to the “last things.” The scene in Matt. xxv. is in line with the text. The day of judgment is pointed to both in the Epistles and Apocalypse. 3. Yet belief in the general judgment is difficult. The mystery is so transcendental, so vast, so seemingly unlikely, that the inability of the imagination to bring home to

itself this stupendous truth is apt to lead the understanding astray and to obscure the light of faith. II. WHY THERE SHOULD BE A GENERAL JUDGMENT? The question was debated of old, why the particular judgment of the soul in the hour of death should not suffice. It was urged that the Lord judged the penitent thief and rewarded him with Paradise on the day of his death; Nah. i. 9 was quoted; and the fact that desert appertains only to the deeds of this life. Yet one verse demolished all this (John xii. 48). The reasons for the general judgment may be found in this—that the issue of our actions do not stop with the actions themselves. Not only actions, but their far-reaching effects, will form the subject-matter of that tribunal. The complete being, body and soul, must also be arraigned before judgment is complete. III. THE PROCEDURE. 1. The persons: “the dead,” the living being numerically inconsiderable when compared with the generations of mankind who had departed. 2. “Small and great” stand before God—that is, all earthly distinctions no longer are of any account; as we should say, “all sorts and conditions of men.” The only surviving difference is that of goodness or badness. 3. They stand before the throne. They are not merely spirits, but men and women in bodily form. 4. He who sits upon the throne is the Son of man. 5. “The books were opened,” &c.; that is, the secrets of all hearts are made manifest (Psa. l. 3; 1 Cor. iv. 5). “Another book,” &c., has been differently explained, as that which pours light upon what is written in “the books,” declaring what is good and what is bad in reality; or again, it is taken to be the book of Divine predestination; or again, as by St. Anselm, as “the life of Jesus,” which is to test the life of His followers, which, perhaps, is the best exposition, for the issues are decided by the lives of those judged—by their “works.” IV. LESSONS. 1. Test our belief in the Second Advent of Jesus Christ: is our faith in the mystery clear and vigorous, resting upon Divine revelation and the teaching of Christ’s Church? 2. Has the mystery an effect upon our lives, knowing it is one in which we must take part? Does it impress upon us the seriousness of life, and how we shall have to answer for all our actions? 3. Are we becoming more familiar with that other “book,” the life of Christ, as written in the Gospels and made manifest in the lives of His saints? and seeking to bring our lives into more accord with it? 4. Do I live as one who really believes in the day of judgment? (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*) *Standing before God*:—Do you not see what that means? Out of all the lower presences with which they have made themselves contented; out of all the chambers where the little easy judges sit with their compromising codes of conduct, with their ideas worked over and worked down to suit the conditions of this earthly life; out of all these partial and imperfect judgment chambers, when men die they are all carried up into the presence of the perfect righteousness, and are judged by that. All previous judgments go for nothing, unless they find their confirmations there. Men who have been the pets and favourites of society, and of the populace, and of their own self-esteem, the change that death has made to them is that they have been compelled to face another standard, and to feel its unfamiliar awfulness. Just think of it. A man who, all his life on earth since he was a child, has never once asked himself about any action, about any plan of his. Is this right? Suddenly, when he is dead, behold he finds himself in a new world, where that is the only question about everything. His old questions as to whether a thing was comfortable, or was popular, or was profitable, are all gone. The very atmosphere of this new world kills them. And upon the amazed soul, from every side, there pours this new, strange, searching question, “Is it right?” That is what it is for the dead man to “stand before God.” But, then, there is another soul which, before it passed through death, while it was in this world, had always been struggling after higher presences. Refusing to ask whether acts were popular or profitable, refusing even to care much whether they were comfortable or beautiful, it had insisted upon asking whether each act was right. It had always struggled to keep its moral vision clear. It had climbed to heights of self-sacrifice that it might get above the miasma of low standards which lay upon the earth. In every darkness about what was right, it had been true to the best light it could see. It grows into a greater and greater incapacity to live in any other presence, as it had struggled longer and longer for this highest company. Think what it must be for that soul, when for it, too, death sweeps every other chamber back and lifts the nature into the pure light of the unclouded righteousness. Now for it, too, the question, “Is it right?” rings from every side; but in that question this soul hears the echo of its own best-loved standard. That is what it is for that soul to “stand before God.” God opens His own heart to that soul, and is both judgment and love. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*)

The books were opened.—*The open books* :—By this imagery it is clear we are meant to understand that there is a record before God of all that we do here. Words and acts of ours which may have escaped our own memory are not lost sight of by Him. In one of the Bridgewater treatises, published some fifty years ago, Babbage pointed out what is in a certain sense true, however overstrained the speculation may have been, that there exist at this moment traces of every word ever spoken upon earth. We are all familiar with the facts that sound takes time to travel and that the further it travels the fainter it becomes. We know also that the air pulsations set in motion by our words do not cease to propagate themselves when they become inaudible to our ears, but that they travel on in fainter pulsations capable of being discerned by organs more sensitive than ours. Babbage's remark was that no limit can be assigned to this propagation; that the waves of air raised by any spoken word within some twenty hours have communicated to every atom of the atmosphere an altered motion due to the infinitesimal portion of the primitive motion conveyed to it through countless channels, which altered movement must continue to influence its path through its future existence. "Those aerial pulses, unseen by the keenest eye, unheard by the acutest ear, unperceived by human senses, are yet demonstrated to exist by human reason." True they may be infinitely small; but modern science concerns itself much with the infinitely little. Babbage's speculation, then, was that if a man possessed unbounded knowledge of mathematical analysis he would be able to calculate the minutest consequence of any primary impulse given to our atmosphere; or conversely from every slightest deviation from its orderly motions to detect the operation of a new cause, to trace the time of its commencement and the point of space at which it originated. Thus, he says, "the air itself may be regarded as a vast library on whose pages are for ever written all that man has ever said or even whispered. If we could imagine the soul in an after state of existence connected with a bodily organ of hearing so sensitive as to vibrate with motions of the air even of infinitesimal force, all the accumulated words pronounced from the creation of the world would fall at once upon the ear. Imagine in addition a power of directing attention entirely to any one class of vibrations; the apparent confusion would vanish, and the punished offender might hear still vibrating on his ear the very words uttered perhaps centuries before, which at once caused and registered his condemnation." And so in like manner he contends, "the earth, air, and ocean are eternal witnesses of the acts we have done. No motion impressed by natural causes or by human agency is ever obliterated. The track of every vessel which has yet disturbed the surface of the ocean remains for ever registered in the future movements of all succeeding particles which may occupy its place. The solid substance of the globe itself, whether we regard the minutest movement of the soft clay which receives its impression from the foot of animals or the concussion produced from fallen mountains rent by earthquakes, equally retains and communicates through all its countless atoms their apportioned share of the motions so impressed. Thus while the atmosphere we breathe is the ever living witness of the sentiments we have uttered, the waters and the more solid materials of the globe bear equally enduring testimony to the acts we have committed." Fanciful as this speculation of Babbage's may be, I could not help being reminded of it by the invention of the phonograph, an invention which seems destined to advance to greater perfection, through which what might seem to be the most transient thing in nature, the utterances of the human voice, are permanently fixed, so that words spoken in America have been heard in our islands, and it seems likely that men of future generations will be enabled to compare the very tones of the voice of actors or orators of our day. These things are only worth mentioning just as enabling the imagination to familiarise itself with the fact that words and actions of ours, transient as they are, can write themselves in permanent record. But there are ways in which they do so which come more practically home to us than those I have mentioned, which one is tempted to dismiss as a mere scientific fancy. In the first place, our words and actions are written in the book of our own memories. In fading characters, no doubt. Yet we know that many things which we seem to have long forgotten are not really blotted out of our recollections. Some accident often brings up to our remembrance events or conversations of times long gone by, which had been absent from our minds for years. A statement made by the late Admiral Beaufort has been often quoted. He was rescued from drowning, and reanimated after he had for some time lost consciousness. He stated that in the last few moments of consciousness a host of long buried memories had suddenly started into life, and that he seemed in these few moments to peruse the history of

his whole past life. But this writing on the book of your memory is a trivial thing in comparison of what I wish next to speak of: the writing on the book of your character. I had better explain what I mean by this word character. Mr. Mill long ago asserted that you could with certainty predict any man's actions on any occasion if you knew his character and knew the motives that were influencing him. The assertion is not true if you use the word character in its ordinary sense. A man may have deservedly got the character of being miserly, and yet you cannot be certain that he will not act generously on some particular occasion, and *vice versâ*. The sense in which the proposition is true is, if you understand by "character" the degree of susceptibility to different motives at any particular instant. So understood, the proposition is true, but it is one of those identical propositions which convey no information. You can tell with certainty whether or not a man will be impelled to action by a certain motive if you know what is at the moment the amount of his susceptibility in respect of that motive. But what I want now to remark is that character (in this, which may be called the scientific sense of the word) is in a state of continual change. Not to speak of changes of disposition resulting from changes of bodily health, every one of our words and acts in some degree influences our character, which results as the integral of a number of very small influences. The amount of change at any moment is imperceptible. The friend whom we meet day by day seems to us in bodily form the same to-day as he had been yesterday; until one day perchance it strikes us how much altered he is from what we can remember him, and in any case one who has not seen him for some time is struck at once with the change, perhaps finds it difficult to recognise him. In like manner it occurs to us from time to time to take notice of changes in a friend's character. We may take notice, for example, that he is less easy to deal with, more snappish in temper than he used to be. The topic does not need to be enlarged upon, what enormous alteration can be made by the accumulated effect of minute changes, each separately, it may be, absolutely undiscernible. But what, though obviously true, much needs to be borne in mind is that none of these minute changes takes place without a cause. If changes in character take place, it is because every incautious word that falls from our lips, every thoughtless action, though our own attention may have been scarce conscious of it, is writing itself on our nature in characters far more deep and more practically important than in those traces on inanimate nature which formed the subject of Babbage's speculation. But there is yet another larger book on which our words and actions write themselves; for they influence not only ourselves, but others. Babbage spoke of the traces spoken words leave on the physical atmosphere. There is a moral atmosphere which presses on us all, though as in the case of the physical atmosphere we feel not the pressure, and scarce take note of its existence unless when its motions are unusually violent. I mean, as of course you understand, the public opinion of the community in which we live, which is practically the law that regulates our conduct. On the wholesomeness of this atmosphere our moral health in great measure depends. But it too responds obediently to every impulse communicated to it by those who live in it. Public opinion is in short nothing but the aggregate representation of the moral sentiments of each individual of the community; and plainly each change in the moral condition of any individual affects that of the community. In an infinitely small degree, no doubt, but I have been all along pointing out that all the great changes in nature are the results of the accumulation of movements each infinitesimally small. Yet, however small the direct effect of the action of one individual on the whole community, it might be large enough in his own immediate neighbourhood. Poisonous miasma might be enough to make a whole house uninhabitable which might have no perceptible effect when diffused through the whole atmosphere. But no comparison with the action of completely inanimate bodies gives an adequate illustration. If you insert a little leaven into a lump of dough, it would be a delusion to imagine that the amount to which the character of the mass had been altered could be estimated by comparing the weight of the newly inserted matter with the weight of the entire. Now, as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. The same temptations which assail us beset others too; if we are sensible of higher and nobler motives, so are others. The sight of a brave and generous deed excites admiration, which soon leads to imitation; the fall of one man leads others to think lightly of a similar fall as natural and pardonable. If it be true that every sound we make sets waves of air in motion which spread in wide and wider circles, far more is a similar statement true of the moral effect of the waves we set in motion. For the mere

physical effect is so attenuated as it spreads as to become in a moment or two imperceptible to our senses, but as I just pointed out, it is otherwise in the moral atmosphere. Each disturbance brings new forces into action, so that the effect resulting from a single impulse may be immensely greater than any one could have predicted as due to the original force. Thus, though what we have said or done be not recorded by pen, ink or paper, it may be written in more permanent form by its influence upon others or ourselves. If I have seemed to you over subtle in elaborating the proof of this, remember I am doing no more than insisting that that is always taking place, instances of which are perpetually striking you. We may, if we look back on our own history, be able to trace in some degree how events were linked together and how trifles helped to bring us to form important decisions. But of the greater part of this we know little. And if God could enable us to read the book of our own lives we should be astonished to find how the performance of some petty act of duty has been blessed by Him as the means of giving us strength for higher service in His cause; or how some apparently trifling opportunities neglected had checked our own spiritual life or had resulted in serious injury to others. When the books are opened God may permit us to see, as He can see, each act written by its consequences. Nothing would make us more hate and dread sin than if we could see how each act of sin may not only be written in terrible stains on our own hearts and consciences, but even on those of persons dear to us, who may have drunk in poison from our example, which cannot be neutralised even by our repentance. I have not spoken of that book which most naturally suggests itself to a reader of the text, the book of God's omniscience, but I have shown that without going beyond what our own reason and experience tell us of we can see that our own words and actions do permanently record themselves. (*G. Salmon, D.D.*) *The revivals of memory a prophecy of judgment*:—I. A perfect memory, then, will accompany judgment. The fields of memory at some magic touch give back again all the lights and shadows which have ever swept across their surface. The children of memory rise again from their graves, and wander in without warning into the once familiar rooms which they have long ceased to visit. The canvas of memory is retouched by some artist whose skill restores the tints which had faded away. The colours of memory are like those in Egyptian halls, long concealed by sand, but fresh as if they had just come from the painter's hand when the drifted heaps are blown away. Is there absolute oblivion? What destroys memory and effaces her work finally? Not the loss of a sense—the deaf musician still possesses the strain which the outward ear has not heard for years. Not old age—the old man's memory is the one thing more touching than his forgetfulness. Not madness, or the fever which for a time seems to calcine the images of the mind. Memories retain in very different degrees, like the sand, like the freestone, or the marble; but all are gifted with this possibility of resurrection. II. With a full perception of the reality of judgment accompanied with a revived memory we shall most profitably enter upon a consideration of the danger of evil thoughts. Let us suggest some simple rules of self-examination. 1. We should then, really examine ourselves, if possible every day, with this prayer—"try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts." We should ask ourselves two questions every night. First, have I led any into sin this day?—We sin together—can we repent together? Second, have I harboured willingly and knowingly any evil thoughts? Have I allowed the birds of evil omen to settle down upon the sacrifice, and failed to sanctify Christ as Lord in my heart? In the dreadful chronology of sin, the actual fall is often not the first, or the hundredth sin. 2. I now suggest some simple rules. When unholy thoughts come, pray quickly—"Spirit of evil! in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, depart." "Blessed Spirit of purity! quench this sinful thought." After falling into sin, pray—"God, be merciful to me a sinner! For the sake of Jesus Christ, lay not this sin to my charge." Occupy yourselves with business. Go into virtuous society. Do not go about visibly brooding. Take freely to wholesome literature and innocent recreations. III. Enough, perhaps, of details. A word of motives. 1. A great commentator on Scripture advises us, if we are tempted to unholy thoughts, to look through our window. "Gaze," he says, "upon the serenity of the sky, and be possessed with a loathing of impurity." But what if we have lost the faculty for such a sight? what if we are colour-blind to all the blue of heaven? Seek for a purer joy. 2. Dwell upon the reality of judgment. Without this you will be liable to strange falls. You will be like sailors who are lost because they have not calculated for the "send" of the sea. (*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*) *The books of*

judgment :—It is obviously of no importance whether we assume that the terms thus employed convey only an image or an absolute and literal reality. If the language is metaphorical, it is nevertheless used to convey to us the ideas which we should naturally conceive from the actual unfolding of a vast register. 1. First, then, there is the book of God's remembrance. Now, strictly speaking, there can be no such thing as forgetfulness in relation to God. Memory implies previous forgetfulness. To remember, is with an effort to summon up the past. But with God, who is eternal, inasmuch as time is not to Him, there can be no such distance put between one event and another. All things are uniformly and unchangeably present to Him. Neither does the multiplicity of the things recorded there cause either mistake or confusion. All things are always present to the infinite mind of the Eternal. Take the old man of fourscore years; God does not call up as by an effort that man's boyhood and earlier manhood, but He looks upon all that he then did, or said, or thought, as though it were now going on: for no past nor future can limit Him who is incomprehensible. The history of every one of us is indelibly written on the mind of God Himself. 2. But we believe that yet another book will then be opened. Each of us carries his own history, written and engraven on the tablet of his own spirit. Conscience will then slumber no more. No counterfeit voices will then drown its accents, or confuse its utterances. No burden of the flesh shall make the vision grow dim, which shall show us to ourselves, shall blur its colours, or distort its lineaments. Imagine, as far as you can, this perfect self-knowledge for the first time breaking in upon us by the quickening power of conscience. We are not, indeed, left altogether without witness beforehand of what this will be. We have an assurance respecting it, amounting to all but the testimony as of some who have risen from the dead, to tell us what they have seen and known. What if we go hence impenitent and unforgiven? What will it be in the resurrection of the dead, in the day when "the dead, small and great," shall "stand before God"? The light of God's countenance shines in on that stricken soul, alas! not now to save and bless, but to witness against, and to condemn. The first glance shows all. He knows as He is known. It tallies—that witness of conscience—with God's knowledge and revelation of him. Self-convicted, self-condemned, sinner, depart! 3. Two volumes have already been opened. A third remains. "Another book was opened, which is the book of life." Now with the idea of life is intimately associated the presence and working of God the Holy Ghost. He is "the Lord and Giver of life." From our baptism upwards, the Holy Ghost has been dealing with us, is dealing with us still, except we be reprobates. Nothing but our own deliberate sinfulness, the wilfulness of our own evil choices, can undo the Spirit's blessed work in our souls. The result of this life-long process of judgment will be seen then, when the books shall be opened, and that other book—"the Book of Life." The question then will be, What can you show of the Spirit of Christ? Upon the manifold doings of the earthly life, where is the seal of the Spirit of the Lord? What remains when the sifting is over, when all former judgments of the Spirit close in this one final judgment, after which is heaven or hell everlasting? (*Bp. Morrell.*) *The opening of the books* :—Someone has said, and the saying has often been applauded, "Give the past to oblivion, the present to duty, and trust the future to Providence." I fear that many of us are much more ready to comply with the first of those three directions than with the other two; indeed, many of us need no persuasion to induce us to consign the past to oblivion, or, at any rate, a great portion of it. But before we turn our backs upon it, might it not be well to form some sort of definite idea of the record that it contains, lest one day we should have to renew our acquaintance with it under the most painful possible circumstances? Above all, before we consign it to oblivion, would it not be wise to endeavour to make sure that God has consigned it to oblivion also, or, at any rate, that part of it which tells against us? Judge therefore yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Unfortunately, however, this is just what most men are exceedingly reluctant to do. Too many resemble in this respect the conduct of the fraudulent bankrupt, who has a general idea that he is not solvent, but goes on from day to day counting upon the chapter of accidents, and hoping that some fortunate circumstance may set him on his legs again; but who shrinks from going carefully through his books and facing his actual commercial position. Even so men drift on from day to day with a sort of undefined misgiving that all is not right between themselves and God, but shrink from facing the true state of the case; never put to their hearts the question, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" or probe their consciences with an honest inquiry, "What hast thou done?" Are you prepared

to face the record of your life? What! Would you shrink from putting that volume into my hands, and permitting me to read its contents in the ears of this congregation, or of your own friends? Then reflect, I beseech you, what will be your feelings when its inmost secrets are divulged in the very presence of your Judge and before an assembled world. We must realise our own individuality then, if we fail to do so now; and indeed it must be admitted that many of us do fail to realise it. Ah, it will avail us little to realise then, it may be for the first time, all that our own separate and distinct existence involves! Nay, rather, it can only enhance our terror then and deepen our despair. But it is otherwise now. And, oh, let me urge upon you the importance of rising above the shallow unrealities of a merely conventional life! Surely it were wiser that as such you should live, not indeed ignoring your relations to society, but neither, on the other hand, permitting your own individuality to be mastered by these relations. But there are other thoughts suggested to our minds by the words of our text. No doubt some other books may be opened in that last dread assize besides those which contain the record of our earthly lives. The book of Nature, which contains so much that seems perplexing and mysterious, and which is so often misread now, and still more frequently never read at all, will be opened at last in all its wonder. And when the books are opened at last, how strong, how damning will be the testimony of Nature against those who have deified her or endeavoured to content themselves with her. Will not His voice be heard upbraiding those who have thus abused her? "Ye fools and blind, I told you that here ye were strangers and sojourners, that ye were born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. I told you that here moth and rust do corrupt, that the grass withereth and the flower fadeth, and that the fashion of this world passeth away. I told you that the things which are seen are temporal. Why did ye live in contradiction to my teaching, ever seeking in me what ye should have known I could not bestow? I might have been your handmaiden or your instructress, but ye insisted on making me your substitute for God, and in doing so ye abused the gift God gave you in me, and, lo! He hath done justly in taking it away. Ye chose earth instead of God, and now ye have lost both for ever." Yet another book will be the book of Providence, which will contain the record of God's dealings with us, just as the book of our lives contains the record of our dealings with God. Here is one who had a pious father, whose life was a constant example of all that is beautiful and attractive in true religion. That life appealed to you, more eloquently than any sermon could; but you hardened your heart against it, and turned your back upon your father's God. You have been the subject of a mother's prayer. Ah! how often has she watered her pillow with her tears for you. You have often been stirred to the very depths of your nature by the appeals of that earnest servant of God whose ministry you attend, and time was when his holy eloquence so deeply impressed you that you were almost persuaded to yield. Ah! in such cases as these, how will you face the book of God's providence? But there is another book surely that will be opened then, though to many it is a closed book now—the book of Revelation. "The words that I speak," exclaimed the Christ, "the same shall judge you at the last day." Ah! we may close our Bibles now, and keep them closed; but remember the glad tidings of deliverance and salvation has gone forth, and we have heard it, and whether we receive it and benefit by it or not, we can never be as though that sound had never reached us. And closely connected with this volume of Revelation there is another which will be opened then, though men seldom think of attempting to read it now—the record of the inner revelations of God to the soul, the story of the dealings of God the Holy Ghost with the heart of man. It will be, I am persuaded, a startling surprise to not a few when this "book" is opened. How many an inward desire, how many a smothered emotion, how many a rising tear, that they never thought of attributing to anything but natural causes, will men find to have been due to the secret influence of the Spirit of God! But there is one "book" more, and for purposes of judgment it is the most important book of all; and it is spoken of here as affording the criterion by which men must stand or fall, and its name is the Book of Life. Of this mysterious volume no less can be said than that Christ Himself is its Author. No one else can write a page or a line or a name in the Book of Life. Are any of you saying to-night, Would to God my name might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, but how is it to be done? I have no power to write it there, and I feel as though it never could be written there. I have merited death over and over again; eternal life I feel, I know, I never can merit. To such let me say, the kingdom of life, the land of the living, has been thrown open to you by Him whom St. Peter

well calls the Prince of Life, and he has obtained the right to introduce you into the fellowship to inscribe your name upon that muster-roll. Put your case into the great Life-giver's hands. Tell Him that you have discovered yourself to be a citizen of the City of Destruction. Tell Him that you feel you cannot by any effort of your own will quicken your own soul, and that therefore by faith you cast yourself upon Him as the "Resurrection and the Life," and you shall prove in your own experience the truth of His words: "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and he that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Life a book:—You are writing your own history, your own biography, the memoirs of yourself. A mysterious and invisible agency is silently tracing the records of your life. The waves in the sea write their history in the ripple marks, congealed in the sands; and so, the hidden and silent currents of our thoughts and feelings leave behind them permanent traces. What you write, God reads. Life is a history. We may classify men's lives as we do books. We have separate series on different subjects. 1. Life may be the history of mind—its growth, culture, and education—its thoughts, perplexities, and questionings—its researches and conclusions. And, yet, till we sit at the feet of the Great Teacher, and learn of Him, we shall never find rest for our souls. 2. Life may be the history of the affections. In some lives the affections determine the character. They are the freshness, the beauty, the strength and joy of life. They may be misplaced—they may degenerate into passions. Instead of being the strength of life, they may become the source of its weakness. A life without love to Christ is a life that does not know what love is, that has never read the literature of the spiritual realm, that has never found the love that passeth knowledge. 3. Life may be the history of the flesh. It may be a life in the flesh—the minding the things of the flesh; a life written in the letter, not in the spirit; a life in sensuous characters. If we live after the flesh, we shall die. Take another series of the books. 1. The book may contain the history of a life that has its ideal—its pattern—its standard. All its endeavours are after the higher life. He who has seen the perfect will never more be satisfied with the imperfect. He who has looked on the mark of the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus, will forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before. But the book may contain the history of a life that has no ideal, no standard; that is, formless, shapeless, purposeless: a life that proposes to itself no end, that has no continuity, no cohesion, that is fragmentary and broken; a life, the scattered fragments of which can never answer any efficient purpose. We may look at another series. 2. In the book we may read the history of a brave life—a life that has its foundations in the everlasting principles of truth; that brings nothing but truth to the truth, and so builds up character; that offers stern resistance to all forms of evil, and does battle with all kinds of falsehood; that practises self-denial; that builds no cross for itself, and yet never fears any cross the world can build; that uses suffering as a sharp instrument for fashioning life, and bringing it into conformity to Christ. It may be a simple and quiet life of which we read the records—a life not wanting in its naturalness, its beauty, its fragrance. The true sons of God often live in obscurity; the world knoweth them not, but then—it knew Him not. 3. It may be the history of a useful life—a life essentially practical—the epitome of which may be found in the words descriptive of the life of Christ, "Who went about doing good." When you die, it may be said that you "rest from your labours, and that your works follow you." 4. The book may contain the history of a Christian life. It is the life of one who felt himself to be a sinner, and has looked out of himself for a Saviour—who has come with all his guilt to the Cross—whose trust is simply in the one Sacrifice for sins. 5. You may read a book that contains the history of an unreal life—a life professing to be Christian, but not a Christ-like life; a life that has "the form, but not the power," that has "a name to live, but is dead"; a life that adjusts with the greatest care the drapery of religion, that arranges all its folds, so that they may fall gracefully around it; a life that has the lamp, but not the oil in the vessel. There is another book which you may read every day—it is the history of a life that is, alas, very common—a life of indifference to everything spiritual. It does not positively reject, but it offers indifference to the Gospel: indifference to God's love, to Christ's death, to the Spirit's work, to all earnest and loving appeals. It is indifference that ruins men. There is only one more series which we can find time to glance at. 6. It is a worldly life which

we are reading now. It thinks only of buying and selling and getting gain. With what sorrow we read the history of a life that is perverted and abused. But we cannot finish reading these books that are open to us without being impressed with the fact that many a life is the history of failure. There was failure at the beginning, failure in the middle, and failure at the end. The book may have this title—"The History of a Life that was a Failure." Some of you are young; you have a fair page; there is as yet no blot, no erasure has been made; you have life before you—it is unwritten. Take care what you write, for what is once written "is written." There can be no new edition, with its emendations and corrections. Ask God's Spirit to teach you, to help you, to guide you by His counsel. We may learn from the subject, "The Possibilities of Life." We may well be aroused from our apathy, and be ashamed of our indolence. Is there no end grand enough? Is there no prize sufficiently attractive? Why do we not exercise ourselves unto godliness? Do not confine all labour to the wants of the outward life. Strive for things that are worth striving for. "Work out your own salvation," &c. The books will be opened. We are to be judged out of the book which we ourselves have written. We are now framing the indictment; we are collecting the evidence; we are preparing the materials of judgment. We shall judge ourselves, and God will judge us. (*H. J. Bevis.*) *The opened books:*—I. There is no power of man's body, no faculty of his mind, no feature of the world he lives in, which does not become a book recording all he does. 1. Man has a relation to God. God is part of his world. God's memory and God's heart must become a record for or against him. 2. We stand in relation to the Book in which God has recorded His will. It challenges our belief and exacts our obedience. It lays down the principles of holiness, and enforces the guilt of transgression. Such a Book surely must be laid open at the bar of Judgment. Its mysterious passages will be read in a flood of light. Its neglected pages will flash with the fire of indignation. 3. Providence is another book in which man's character is written. The mind of man cannot disentangle the threads that are intermingled in the web of life. But there is one Hand that can. He knows the end from the beginning. II. Science has its own suggestions on this matter. It points us, for instance, to a slab of sandstone taken from the quarry, and bids us notice the impressions left upon it. In the dim past a reptile of monstrous shape walked along the shore of an ancient sea seeking its prey, and left these marks behind it. The next tide covered the footprints with a layer of sand, and the following tide did the same. For centuries that process was repeated; deeper and deeper sank the sandstone, still preserving the story of the reptile's life, till a change took place. The mass of rock, long buried, was heaved up again into the sunlight. Man needed the rock for his dwelling: the crowbar opened the leaves of the stone book, and science interpreted it. Yes! and we are told that what the rock did for that reptile the universe is doing for us. The air is a vast library, on whose pages are written for ever all that we have said or even whispered. There is not a thought, or a feeling, permitted to lodge in the mind that does not mark the face. We cannot by abstaining from action cease from writing: work undone, duty unperformed, responsibility not met, have their record too. Every man is "writing memoirs of himself." The character we trace is immortal. It cannot be folded up as a vesture and laid aside. The dead does not and cannot bury its dead. We cannot revise this book. Only once do we take a step or decline to take it; once taken it cannot be recalled. The past closes up like a crystal wall behind us, transparent but impervious. Further, the mind is a book; every faculty a volume by itself. Imagination is the divinest and most regal. Heaven comes to earth; the plainest house is turned into a palace. This world, cursed as it is by sin, seems a second Eden, and God walks up and down in it. But let the imagination pass under the domain of an impure or sinful passion: it does not cease to work, but its bearing is changed, and what a change! God is gone; the light is put out. The imagination has gone out into foul places. It has been a hewer of wood and drawer of water to Satan. At his bidding the eye sees vile visions, the tongue sings foul songs, the hand handles black deeds. What a spectacle when that book is opened! If imagination is the grander faculty, memory is the more useful. It is the mother of arts and sciences; the parent of history and experience. It is an ocean which, if it swallows up every jewel, will one day bring all to light. A great sea filling, never full, but from which will come one day a perfect resurrection. Latimer tells us that, when examined before Bishop Bonner, he took special care of what he spoke. He heard a pen at work in the chimney behind the cloth, setting down all, and perhaps more than all, he said.

Imagine how we should feel in daily life if told that some one was writing our history, that his reporters were present when we spoke, that his spies watched every movement when we went abroad, that they dogged our footsteps out of doors, sat with us at table, followed us to our profoundest meditations, watched us in an hour of prayer. This imagination is a fact. On the broad page of memory every event of daily life is written and cannot be erased. That book will also one day be opened. Think of Felix and Nero confronted by Paul, Pharaoh by Moses, Ahab by Elijah, the father by the child whom he has permitted to tread the way to ruin; the minister by the people to whom he preached smooth things; the murderer meeting again the victim for whose blood he plotted; the seducer compelled again to face the poor girl whose life he has blighted. The thought becomes more terrible when we remember that conscience is another book. Conscience is a sort of moral memory. It may be said to anticipate as well as to reflect. Nothing escapes its watchful eye. Every sin is duly marked, every corrupt imagination, every wrong principle, indulged in or professed. Every idle word, every unhallowed thought, goes to swell the score. Even if our sins were as frequent as our breathing, the account goes on day after day; pages are filled till the last awful hour has come, when the sinner beholds the magnitude of his transgressions. III. Retribution is a fact which the preacher must declare, and which the man must ponder. But retribution is not the gospel of Christ. It is to be used for the levelling of the wall that guards the mount, that the King of Glory may enter in. There is another book in the hand of the Judge. It is the Book of Life. When His children are recorded there He gives them a new name. What beautiful names He gives! It is worth becoming a child of the family to get one. For Abram He writes Abraham, the Father of the faithful and Friend of God. For Saul of Tarsus, Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles. Jacob, the supplanter, becomes Israel, Prince with God. (*J. A. Macfadyen, D.D.*) *The books opened*:—I know not how many books there shall be, nor how ponderous, nor all their titles: but I remark, first, that there will be a book of tears. Have you ever thought, ye afflicted ones, that God is keeping a record of all your woe? There have been grains of corn found in ancient sepulchres, three thousand years old, but they have been brought out and recently planted, and have come up luxuriantly. So the sorrows of earth have in them enough vitality to produce an eternal fruitage. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." 2. Again, I remark that there will be a book of unforgiven sins. The iniquities of the righteous will all have been pardoned, and so will not be mentioned. But the sins of the unpardoned will on that day be announced. Sins of the heart: the pride that would not bow to Divine authority, the foolish choice of this world to the next, the impure thought, the unboly imaginations. Sins of the tongue: tattling, base innuendoes, backbiting, profanity, hypercriticism of the conduct of others. Sins of the hands, of the eyes, of the feet: from the smallest omission to the most diabolical commission, all of which shall be recorded in the book from which the Judge shall read. Oh, when it is opened, what cowering! what shame! what hate! what woe! what despair! Drunkenness will answer for all the property it wasted, for all the manly natures it imbruted. 3. Again, I remark, there will be a book of privileges. If you have lived twenty years, you have had more than one thousand Sabbaths. If you have lived more than fifty years, you have had more than two thousand Sabbaths. What will be our sensation when those one, two, or three thousand Sabbaths confront us at the judgment. From that book of privilege God will read so many strivings of the spirit, so many sicknesses when we vowed return, so many sacraments, so many death-beds, so many accidents, so many escapes, so many warnings, so many glorious invitations of a crucified Jesus. 4. Again, there will be a book of good deeds. Then we shall hear of the cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple; the food left at the wayside cabin, the smile of approval, the word of encouragement, the good deed of which made no record, blazing out among the names of those who endowed universities, and civilised nations, and broke shackles, and disenthralled empires, and inspired generations. 5. Again, there will be a book of death. When it is opened, all the evil-doers of earth will tremble for their fate. What a long catalogue of liars, drunkards, thieves, murderers, adulterers, vagabonds, tricksters, oppressors, defrauders, infidels, blasphemers! Glory to the grace that ransomed the chief of sinners. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The book of memory*:—I am assured that there is no such thing as forgetting possible to the mind; a thousand circumstances may and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions of the mind, but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains for ever. Just as the

stars seem to withdraw from the common light of day, whereas we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil, and that they are waiting to be revealed when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn. (*De Quincey.*) *The book of life*:—I. It is VITAL; hence here called the book of life. And if our names be written in this book of life, then the law of life is written vitally in our souls. The entire destruction of the adversary and all his powers. If I am identified with this book of life, I am brought to where the adversary, as far as I am concerned, and all his powers, are brought to nought. II. This book is not only vital but also EXEMPTIONAL. It is exemptional in a threefold respect. 1. First, in exempting us from the wrath to come; such shall not be cast into the lake of fire. This globe shall be burned; but what care I for that? I have a new earth. 2. As this book of life exempts from the wrath to come, so it exempts us from the fear of man. 3. Third, it is exemptional also from delusion; cannot deceive these people. III. But, lastly, this book of life is ADMISSIONAL. If I am identified thus with the gospel, if I am an able servant of the new covenant, if I overcome the fear of man, if I am delivered from delusion, and am thus called, and chosen, and faithful, then I shall be admitted into this city. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth"; and we can enter there without defilement only by the perfection that is in Christ; "nor worketh abomination"; and we can enter free from abomination only by the same thing, the completeness that is in Christ; "or maketh a lie"; and we can enter there only by the truth; "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (*Jas. Wells.*) *The book of life*:—Tamerlane had always by him a catalogue of his best servants, and their good deserts, which he daily perused. (*J. Trapp.*) The dead were judged . . . according to their works.—*The Day of Judgment*:—It belongs to man, in which he would seem to differ essentially from the inferior animals, to make himself and his own thoughts an object of thought; not only to know what he is doing, but to be able to review his conduct and compare it with an ideal standard of expediency and right; in one word, to call himself to account. There is, therefore, an important sense in which the whole of human life is one continued Day of Judgment. Moreover, the self-judgment here referred to is understood and felt to be of an authority and sanction higher than that of man. We cannot shake off the conviction that there is a Divine, as well as a human, element in conscience. It is the voice of God speaking to us through the human faculties, ordained by Him for that purpose. Who can believe that God has so made us, that we cannot help judging ourselves by the law of right, without believing, at the same time, that He intended us to be judged, and rewarded or punished according to that law? On looking round, however, we see that this law is very far from being universally applied, or fully carried out in the present life. If there is ever to be a perfectly righteous retribution, we must look for it beyond the grave. By such natural intimations as these, almost every people, with or without the aid of revelation, have been led to entertain, with more or less distinctness and confidence, the presentiment of "a judgment to come." Even in Homer there are unmistakable traces of a popular belief in a future state of existence, where the fate of the individual is made to turn, more or less, on his previous character, and especially on his conduct towards the gods. The same is also laid down as a practical doctrine of great moment by the best among the pagan philosophers and moralists; and sometimes, as in the apologue of Erus the Pamphylian, given in Plato's Republic, in language bearing a striking resemblance to that used four hundred years afterwards in the New Testament. A brave man, having fallen in battle, was permitted to return to the earth on the twelfth day, in order to warn the living by a revelation of what he had seen. He had seen the dead arraigned, and when the judges, to borrow the words of the apologue, "gave judgment, they commanded the just to go on the right hand, and upwards through the heaven, having fitted marks on the front of those that had been judged; but the unjust they commanded to the left, and downwards, and these likewise had behind them marks of all that they had done." From the pagans we pass to the Jews, among whom Christianity arose. Moses, their great Lawgiver, aimed to establish what is called a theocracy, that is a government of God upon earth, in which perfect righteousness was to be fulfilled. Of course, in such a state of things, as they had a present Divine judgment, there was the less occasion to appeal to a future Divine judgment. Be this, however, as it may, there can be no doubt that in the time of our Lord the great body of the Jewish people had become believers in the doctrine of a

future state of rewards and punishments. Accordingly, the doctrine of a future state of retribution cannot be accounted a Christian doctrine in the sense of being first taught in Christianity. It has given us new evidence of the facts in the case; it has enabled us to see these facts in new lights, and under new aspects and relations: so that the old doctrine, in itself considered, has become substantially a new doctrine. This being the case, it remains for me to speak of what may properly be considered as peculiar and original in the Christian doctrine of the judgment to come. On the whole, the most natural and Christian view would seem to be, that, with every individual, as soon as this life ends the next life begins. As regards everything pertaining to the form and manner—or, so to speak, the outward appearance—of the invisible world, what most distinguishes Christianity when compared with other and false religions, is, not the fulness of the information it conveys, but its discreet and solemn reserve. One thing, however, is put beyond question—happiness to the good, misery to the bad; that is, all that can give moral effect to the revelation: not a word, not a syllable, either to stimulate or gratify an idle and impertinent curiosity. Nowhere but in Christianity will you find it distinctly laid down, as of Divine authority, that every man will be judged at last by what he has himself done, whether it be good or bad. Let us now go one step further, and ascertain, if we can, precisely what is meant when it is said that men are to be judged “according to their deeds.” If, therefore, there is one thing clearer than any other in Christian ethics, it is this—that every man is to stand or fall according to what he is in himself;—not by what he does, except in so far as it expresses what he really is. Acts of worship in a hypocrite, munificent gifts merely for the name of it, solemn make-beliefs of the would-be worshipper of God and the world at the same time, go for nothing. The question continually returns, what is man in himself? There is no occasion for the nice balancing of accounts, item by item, referred to above; neither is there any occasion for a miraculous memory to enable us to call to mind every thought we have indulged, every word we have uttered, and every action we have performed. It will be enough, if we know in what moral and spiritual state all these have left us; and to know this it will be enough, if we are made conscious of what we are. It may be said, that the guilty soul will still be in the hands of a compassionate God; and this is true. Beware, however, of making compassion in God what it often is in man—a mere tenderness, I had almost said a mere weakness. Nor is this all. We must not expect in the next world what is incompatible with its nature and purpose. We are placed here to make a beginning. Are you sure it will be so in the world to come? Why first a world of probation and then a world of retribution, if after all both are to be equally and alike probationary? Let us not run risks, where the error, if it be one, is irretrievable, and the stake infinite. (*James Walker.*) *On future happiness or misery*:—I. There exists a NATURAL SENSE OF EQUITY IN THE MIND, which dictates, that recompense in futurity will be apportioned according to our knowledge or ignorance of our duty, to our exemption from temptations, or the magnitude of our dangers;—that flagrant offences ought to be more severely punished than smaller errors; great excellences more honoured than inferior good qualities; and, in short, that the number of good or bad deeds, as well as their nature, will be estimated in our great account. And these notions respecting the Divine administration appear to be sanctioned by striking facts. In the economy of the present world, it is most clearly perceived to be a general law of the Divine Providence, that different degrees of iniquity shall produce, as their natural consequences, nearly proportionate measures of suffering. Does not the dissipated character, even after his reformation, experience the result of the waste he has made, in fortune, in health, in reputation, or in time? Is he not often deeply stung by self-reproach on account of the past, though he feels humbly assured that, through Christ, it is forgiven? II. To these surmises of reason, let us annex the surer information of SCRIPTURE. It is enjoined (Deut. xxv. 2.) that, “if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to be beaten according to his fault by a certain number,” namely, of stripes:—in allusion to which passage our Saviour declares (Luke xii. 47, 48). Again, when our Lord declared to the cities of Galilee, “It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon,” &c., it is obvious that in this very phrase more tolerable, the same diversity of future allotment is implied—the same balance of disobedience and suffering (James iii. 1). III. An assent to this article of belief is beset with several DANGERS, against which it is of the utmost moment that a serious caution should be offered. 1. Beware, in admitting this

delicate doctrine, of considering works as in themselves worth anything—as in the smallest degree establishing a right to remuneration in the sight of a pure God. What hast thou that thou didst not receive? and, after ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable servants. 2. Another danger is that of our resting satisfied with inferior degrees of obedience. " 'Tis well:—we are secure of obtaining some place in heaven;—we may with safety, therefore, now leave something undone, or not trouble ourselves about higher attainments." But chiefly be it remembered, as the most serious truth, that though the gospel of Christ offers happiness to the penitent, no portion of that happiness can be expected by the presumptuous transgressor, let him offend but even in one point. 3. A mercenary service, in opposition to that holiness which results from the love of God, is likewise to be apprehended as a perversion of the doctrine before us. (*J. Grant, M.A.*) **The sea gave up the dead which were in it.**—*The sea giving up its dead:*—I. This great doctrine, **THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY**, seems yet better fitted than the kindred truth of the immortality of the soul, to make a powerful impression on the mind of man, when receiving the gospel for the first time. The heathen may have heard of the existence after death of the immaterial spirit within him; but he thinks of that principle as something impalpable and unearthly, that he has never yet seen, and that is scarce the same with himself. Talk to him of the inward man of the soul, and he listens as if you spoke of a stranger. But bring your statements home to the outward man of his body, and he feels that it is he himself who is to be happy or to be wretched in that eternity of which you tell him. Hence a living missionary, in his first religious instructions to the king of a heathen tribe in South Africa, found him indifferent and callous to all his statements of the gospel, until this truth was announced. It aroused in the barbarian chief the wildest emotions, and excited an undisguised alarm. He had been a warrior, and had lifted up his spear against multitudes slain in battle. He asked, in amazement, if these his foes should all live. And the assurance that they should arise filled him with perplexity and dismay, such as he could not conceal. He could not abide the thought. A long slumbering conscience had been pierced through all its coverings. II. **THE SEA WILL BE FOUND THICKLY PEOPLED WITH THE MORTAL REMAINS OF MANKIND.** In the earlier ages of the world, when the relations of the various nations to each other were generally those of bitter hostility, and the ties of a common brotherhood were little felt, the sea, in consequence of their comparative ignorance of navigation, served as a barrier, parting the tribes of opposite shores, who might else have met only for mutual slaughter, ending in extermination. Now that a more peaceful spirit prevails, the sea, which once served to preserve, by dividing the nations, has, in the progress of art and discovery, become the channel of easier intercourse and the medium of uniting the nations. It is the great highway of traffic, a highway on which the builder cannot encroach, and no monarch possesses the power of closing the path or engrossing the travel. Thus continually traversed, the ocean has become, to many of its adventurous voyagers, the place of burial. But it has been also the scene of battle, as well as the highway of commerce. Upon it have been decided many of those conflicts which determined the dynasty or the race to whom for a time should be committed the empire of the world. All these have served to gorge the deep with the carcases of men. It has had, again, its shipwrecks. Though man may talk of his power to bridle the elements, and of the triumphs of art compelling all nature to do his work, yet there are scenes on the sea in which he feels his proper impotence. The sea, then, has its dead. III. **THE MEETING OF THE DEAD OF THE SEA WITH THE DEAD OF THE LAND.** 1. There must be, then, in this resurrection from the sea, much to awaken feeling in the others of the risen dead, from this, if from no other cause: these, the dead of the sea, will be the kindred and near connections of those who died upon the land. Among those whom the waters shall in that day have restored, will be some who quitted home expecting a speedy return, and for whose coming attached kindred and friends looked long, but looked in vain. The exact mode, and scene, and hour of their death have remained until that day unknown to the rest of mankind. And can it be without feeling that these will be seen again by those who loved them, and who through weary years longed for their return, still feeding "the hope that keeps alive despair"? The dead of ocean will be the children and pupils, again, of the dead of the land. Their moral character may have been formed, and their eternal interests affected, less by their later associates on the deep than by the earlier instructions they received on shore. 2. Let it be remembered, again, that a very large proportion of those who have thus perished on the ocean will appear to have perished in the service of the landsman. Some in voyages of

discovery, despatched on a mission to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge, or to discover new routes for commercial enterprise, and new marts for traffic. Thus perished the French navigator La Perouse, whose fate was to the men of the last generation so long the occasion of anxious speculation. Still greater numbers have perished in the service of commerce. As a people we are under special obligations to the art and enterprise of the navigator. We are a nation of emigrants. The land we occupy was discovered and colonised by the aid of the mariner. The seaman has, then, been employed in our service. And as far as he was our servant doing our work, we were bound to care for his well-being; and if he perished in our service, it was surely our duty to inquire whether he perished in any degree by our fault. 3. Others of those buried in the waters have lost their lives in defence of those upon the shore. Can a nation claim the praise of common honesty or gratitude, who neglects the moral and spiritual interests of these their defenders? 4. Let us reflect, also, on the fact, that many of those who have perished on the waters will be found to have perished through the neglect of those living on shore. We allude not merely to negligence in providing the necessary helps for the navigator. May there not be other classes of neglect equally or yet more fatal? The parent who has neglected to govern and instruct his child, until that child, impatient of all restraint, rushes away to the sea as a last refuge, and there sinks, a victim to the sailor's sufferings or the sailor's vices, can scarce meet with composure that child in the day when the sea gives up its dead. Or if, as a community, or as churches, we shut our eyes to the miseries of the sick and friendless seaman, or to the vices and oppressions by which he is often ruined for time and eternity, shall we be clear in the day when inquisition is made for blood? No, unless the Church does her full duty, or, in other words, reaches in her efforts the measure of her full ability, for the spiritual benefit of the seaman, her neglect must be chargeable upon her. 5. Many of the dead of the sea will be found to have been victims to the sins of those upon shore. Those who have perished in unjust wars waged upon that element, will they have no quarrel of blood against the rulers that sent them forth? The statesmen, the blunders or the crimes of whose policy the waters have long concealed, must one day face those who have been slaughtered by their recklessness. And so it may be said of every other form of wickedness, of which those that sail in our ships are rendered the instruments or the victims. The keeper of the dram-shop, or the brothel, where the sailor is taught to forget God and harden himself in iniquity, will not find it a light thing, in that great day of retribution, to encounter those whom he made his prey. The literature of the shore will be called to account for its influence on the character and well-being of the seaman. The song-writer, who, perhaps, a hungry and unprincipled scribbler, penned his doggerel lines in some garret, little careful except as to the compensation he should earn, the dirty pence that were to pay for his rhymes, will one day be made to answer for the influence that went forth from him to those who shouted his verses in the night watch, on the far sea, or perchance upon some heathen shore. The infidel, who may have sat in elegant and lettered ease, preparing his attacks upon the Bible and the Saviour, thought little, probably, but of the fame and influence he should win upon the shore. But the seeds of death which he scattered may have been wafted whither he never thought to trace them. And in that day of retribution he may be made to lament his own influence on the rude seaman whom he has hardened in blasphemy and impiety, and who has sported with objections derived by him at the second hand or third hand from such writers, whilst he figured amongst his illiterate and admiring companions as the tarred Voltaire or Paine of the fore-castle and the round top, the merriest and boldest scoffer of the crew. Lessons: 1. The dead shall rise, all shall rise, and together. From the land and from the sea, wherever the hand of violence or the rage of the elements have scattered human dust, shall it be reclaimed. And we rise to give account. Out of Christ, judgment will be damnation. 2. If the reappearance from the seas of the sinner who perished in his sins be a thought full of terror, is there not, on the other hand, joy in the anticipation of greeting those who have fallen asleep in Christ, but whose bones found no rest beneath the clods of the valley, and whose remains have been reserved under the waters until that day, while, over their undistinguished resting-place, old ocean with all its billows has for centuries pealed its stormy anthem? 3. This community especially owes a debt to that class of men who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters. 4. It is, again, by no means the policy of the Church to overlook so influential a class as is that of our seafaring brethren. They are in the path of our missionaries to the heathen. If converted, they might be amongst

their most efficient coadjutors, as, whilst unconverted, they are among the most embarrassing hindrances the missionary must encounter. 5. While humbled in the review of her past negligence, and in the sense of present deficiencies, as to her labours for the seaman, the Church has yet cause for devout thankfulness in the much that has recently been done for the souls of those who go down to the sea in ships, and in the perceptible change that has already been wrought in the character of this long-neglected class of our fellow-citizens and fellow-immortals. 6. In that day, when earth and sea shall meet heaven in the judgment, where do you propose to stand? Among the saved, or the lost—the holy, or the sinful—at the right hand of the Judge, or at His left? (*W. R. Williams, D.D.*) *On the general resurrection:*

—I. THE ELEMENTS INTO WHICH THE DEAD ARE DISSOLVED DO ONLY RECEIVE THEM INTO SAFE CUSTODY. The matter out of which we are made doth never perish; the foundation remains, though it put on a thousand shapes and figures. The quantity and quality indeed of many men's bodies is lost, by various transmutations, in the several elements through which they pass after their dissolution: yet for all this, the substance is kept entire, and wholly incapable of being destroyed. II. THESE ELEMENTS ARE, AT THE COMMAND OF THE ALMIGHTY, TO GIVE UP THOSE PLEDGES WHICH THEY RECEIVE. The fish that swallowed up Jonah, and afterwards threw him up again upon the dry land, when God by His will appointed it so to do, was not more obedient to that will than each element shall be in giving up the dead upon the authority of His command. 1. The earth, and the sea, and other quarters of the world to which they retire, are in every point known to God. Nor is He ignorant of the means which are proper to unite them, how far soever they may be scattered, or how much soever confounded. 2. Another argument why the dead should be given up at His word is, because the matter whereof they were composed lies subject to Him, and He can new-mould and repair it as He pleaseth. What work can be too hard for Him that is above all resistance whatsoever? Could He do the greater work in making us that which we were not, and shall we doubt of His ability in the less, which is refashioning us to what we were? But it may be asked, What necessity is there for such a general delivery of the dead? Cannot the sea and the land bury us, as it does other creatures, who are dissolved into those elements and perish? Why must we be reposed in them, as in a treasury; preserved for a time, in order to be taken out or given up again? At present I would only observe, that the necessity of this dispensation will appear from the consideration of God, of Christ, and of mankind. (1) Of God, who is necessarily just; and therefore is in justice concerned in a general giving up of the dead to Him, that so the whole man may acknowledge the righteousness and equity of His government. (2) The necessity of the rising again will appear by a consideration of Christ, who has merited lordship and dominion over us. Now the honour of that lordship would cease, except the dead were given up to be subject to His rule. (3) The consideration of mankind evinces the necessity of this dispensation, who are subject to His laws, and qualified with natures to receive wages. These are divided into good and bad, each of which have need of a resurrection. The good, that so they may silence their false accusers and clear their innocence to the world, and experimentally find by what they reap that their labour hath not been in vain in the Lord. The bad, that they may receive a due recompense of their deeds. Further, it is to be considered, that although the personal acts of sin in the wicked are transient, and die with the committers; yet the poison and infection of those acts long continues. To conclude. You hear there is no retreat, no sanctuary for your bodies to lodge in, neither in sea, nor in land, nor fire, nor air, but they will be everywhere exposed to the all-seeing eye of God, and ready to be given up at His command. (*Jas. Roe, M.A.*) **Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.—Death and the grave:**—It is of His two chief enemies that God here speaks—"death and the grave," or "place of the dead." This is not the first time, nor the only place, in which they are thus classed together. There is a striking series of passages, running through all Scripture, in which they are named as allies—fellow-workers in the perpetration of one great deed of darkness from the beginning. Often are death and the grave in the lips of Job. David speaks of them (*Psa. vi. 5*). Solomon uses them in figure (*Cant. viii. 6*). Hezekiah refers to them (*Isa. xxxviii. 18*). Isaiah mentions them in their connection with Messiah (*liii. 9*). Hosea proclaims their awful fellowship in evil (*xiii. 14*). Paul takes up the language of the old prophets (*1 Cor. xv. 55*). And then, as the summing up of the whole, we have these strange words of the text. This is the end of that death-power which was let loose in paradise, and which has continued to exercise dominion upon earth through these two channels. The reign has been

long and sad; it has been one of dissolution, and blight, and terror; but it ends at last. Death has been the sword of law for ages; but when it has done its work on earth, God takes this sword, red with the blood of millions, snaps it in pieces before the universe, and casts its fragments into the flame, in the day of the great winding-up, in token that never again shall it be needed, either on earth or throughout the universe. The grave has been the chain and the prison-house of justice; but when its purpose is served, and justice has got all its own in the heaven of the saved and the hell of the lost, God gathers up each link of the chain and flings them into the lake of fire upon the head of the great potentate of evil; He razes the dungeon to its foundation, and buries its ruins in a grave like that of Sodom, the lake of the everlasting burnings. Death and the grave were cast into the lake of fire. I. GOD ABHORRS DEATH. It is to Him even more unlovable than it is to us. He has set limits to its power; He has made it to His saints the very gate of heaven—for blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; He has proclaimed resurrection and incorruption. But still, with all these abatements, He loves it not, nor is reconciled to it in one act or aspect. It is, in His eyes, even more than in ours, an enemy, a destroyer, a demon, a criminal, a robber. So thoroughly does He loathe it, that in order to make His displeasure known, He reserves it to the last for doom; He sets it apart for a great outstanding condemnation, and then casts it into the lake of fire. II. GOD'S REASONS FOR ABHORRING DEATH. 1. It is the ally of sin (Rom. v. 12). Partners in evil, sin and death have held dark fellowship together from the beginning, the one reflecting and augmenting the odiousness of the other; like night and storm, each in itself terrible, but more terrible as companions in havoc. 2. It is Satan's tool. To inflict disease, but not to heal; to wound, but not to bind up; to kill, but not to make alive—these are the works of the devil which God abhors, and which the Son of God came to destroy. 3. It is the undoing of His work. God did not mean creation to crumble down or evaporate. But death has seized it. Man's body and man's earth are falling to pieces, undermined by some universal solvent; the beauty, and the order, and the power giving way before the invader. The sculptor does not love the hand that spoils his statue, nor the mother the fever that preys upon her darling; so God has no pleasure in that enemy that has been ruining the work of His hands. 4. It has been the source of earth's pain and sorrow. Pain is the messenger of disease, and disease is the touch of death's finger; and with disease and death what an amount of sorrow has poured in upon our world! 5. It has laid hands on His saints. Though He permitted Herod, and Pilate, and Nero, and the kings of the earth, to persecute His Church, He did not thereby indicate indifference to the wrong, far less sympathy with the wrong-doer. He treasures up wrath against the persecutor; He will judge and avenge the blood of His own. So will He take vengeance on the last enemy, 6. It laid hands upon His Son. Death smote the Prince of life, and the grave imprisoned Him. This was treason of the darkest kind, the wrong of wrongs, perpetrated against the highest in the universe, God's incarnate Son. And shall not God visit for this? Shall not His soul be avenged on such a destroyer for such a crime? (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.—*The eternity of the sorrows of the lost*:—Is this, then, the end of all the projects and all the acts of the boastful sinner—man? Alas! who, then, art thou, that repliest against Omnipotence? Who art thou, that thinkest God is to be mocked? I. WHEN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT SHALL COME, AND HOW LONG IT SHALL LAST, REVELATION HAS NOT DISCLOSED. It is called the day of judgment: but in Scripture a day is not always meant to express that particular portion of time which we affix to the term; but a season. But however long or however short a period the tremendous judgment of the world will occupy, we know assuredly that at its conclusion a solemn separation will be made of those who have served God, from those who have served Him not. The place to which the latter will be consigned is described in almost every term expressive of sorrow and pain. It is called a furnace of fire, the bottomless pit, whence shall be seen ascending the smoke of the torments of the damned. Scripture warns us in the plainest terms, that it is not merely the loss of the happiness which God had offered that the condemned sinner then shall suffer, but some positive and exquisite anguish and torment. "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation." "They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." "They shall go away into everlasting punishment." II. THE LEADING OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF

ETERNAL PUNISHMENTS. 1. The chief one—and, indeed, what almost comprises all the rest—is that it seems hardly consistent with the justice of God to inflict eternal punishment for a temporal sin. The notion seems to arise from the want of a due consideration of what is sin. If a man considers only one or two individual acts of his own wickedness, there may appear between them, taken abstractedly, and eternal punishment, a great disproportion. But he omits to consider what the effect of those few acts is, not only on his own soul, but on the world in which he lives. But independently of the effect of sin on others, you ought not to forget, however trifling your sin may appear, what is the nature of a sinful soul in the pure sight of God! There is another consideration. Although eternal punishment is denounced against what are termed temporal sins, yet it is only on sins unrepented of. God has shown you how you may flee from the wrath to come. He has declared how you may be redeemed from the influence and the curse of sin. The degree of your punishment will certainly be proportioned to your sins, for the Judge of all the earth will do right. But its duration seems to be fixed for eternity by the immutable laws of Providence, because no revealed means remain after death for cleansing your soul from its pollution. There is yet one other consideration. When a man dies without repentance and change of heart, after a life of habitual neglect of heaven, it is but reasonable to believe that had his life been prolonged, and the power of indulging in sin remained, he would have continued a sinner as long as he continued to exist. It is said, I know, that punishments cannot be meant to be final and eternal, because they are intended to reclaim, either by their effect on the sinner himself, or as examples to others. The punishments of this world are so. But lest we should presume, and think these His only judgments, He has given us proofs sufficient that in the ordinances of His providence there are such things as final punishments. Every one knows that the whole world was once exterminated except one family, and that such extermination was for its sins. We are hereby taught that punishment is not always intended for the reformation of the sinner. 2. We will now consider those observations which are drawn against the doctrine from Scripture itself. (1) We are reminded, then, that the words which are made use of to imply what we consider to be a never-ceasing duration are often applied in Scripture to other matters, which are known to have an end, and therefore that they mean not strictly and properly eternity, but only a long and undefined succession of ages. It is perfectly true that the words, “eternal,” “everlasting,” and “for ever,” are applied to some things which are known to have an end: but we see them also applied to those things which we know have no end; and, above all, the expressions in question concerning the duration of punishments are those which are applied to show the true and proper eternity of the Supreme Being Himself. To reconcile this apparent inconsistency, however, is not very difficult. These words, “eternal,” “everlasting,” and the like, seem always meant to indicate the longest expressible existence of the thing, or the being, to which they are applied. (2) It is said that the doctrine of eternal punishments militates against the known mercy of God and the general spirit of the gospel, which is a scheme of salvation. It is maintained that as it is impossible for any creature to live in eternal torments, though some may persist for a longer, some for a shorter, period, all in the end must be subdued, and that a universal restoration will crown the solemn scene: that, as the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost, His coming would be defeated if the greater part were lost for ever; that when it is said He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet, and that the last enemy, which shall be destroyed, is death—the death here intended is the second death—and that when this penal fire shall have accomplished its purpose, it, too, shall be extinguished; that then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” These are contemplations, full indeed of awfulness, but full of holy joy, and agreeing, as they do, with the hopes of frail and sinful man, are too readily, perhaps, indulged by him as founded on irrefragable truth. Whatever meaning your own opinion may affix to the Scriptural expressions concerning the duration of the sinner’s woes, remember one truth, viz., that no limit is there affixed to them; that, allowing the terms to mean only a succession of ages upon ages, yet that no period is mentioned when such succession shall end. On what is to take place after the day of judgment Scripture seems purposely silent. (*G. Matthew, M.A.*) *The terrible doom of the lost*:—It is a pathetic tale to tell, but I do not vouch for its absolute truth, that once a famous composer wrote a great anthem to be sung at a festival. He sought to picture the scenes of the final judgment, and introduced a strain of music

representing the solemn lamentations of the lost. But no singer was found willing to take such a part. So the wailings and woes were omitted; and when the passage was reached, the leader simply beat the time in silence till the awful chasm was passed, and the musicians took up gloriously the strains of celestial unison lying on the other side of it, "The shout of them that triumph and the song of them who feast." (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Society divided by Christ into two great parts*:—In a sermon preached by the Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., he pointed out the different aspects from which the world and Christ viewed society. The world draws a horizontal line of division, or rather two lines, which mark off humanity into three sections, the upper, middle, and lower classes. Christ draws a vertical line throughout the whole scale, dividing society into two parts, those on the right hand and those on the left; the sheep and the goats.

CHAPTER XXI.

VERS. 1-8. I saw a new heaven and a new earth.—*The new heavens and new earth*.—I. SCRIPTURE DISTINCTLY REVEALS THE FACT THAT THIS WORLD IS NOT DESTINED TO CONTINUE AS IT IS. "The fashion of this world changes" is the constant statement of the inspired writers. We seem to learn this from the very fading qualities of everything that surrounds us. We have scarcely enjoyed the warmth of the summer sun when the leaves of autumn fall fast and thick around us. These have scarcely disappeared when we tread upon the snows of winter; and these have scarcely melted away before the budding of spring again surrounds us, and Nature gives indications that she is about once more to revive. It is not only from Scripture that we gain such lessons as this. We give it to you as a fact, which is proved to demonstration by science, that there is constantly going on, in the mechanism of the universe a similar decay to that which is going on in any other mechanism that you know. You are aware that the various planets that surround our globe move through an atmosphere; and that this atmosphere acts as a repelling and hindering force upon the planets which thus move; and that this hindering force, acting constantly upon every planet that moves through space, must eventually so check the velocity of those planets, and at length so act upon their movements, as to bring the whole of the planet-machinery to a stand. And, in addition to this, you are to remember that science points out to us the fact that in the very centre of our globe there exists a sufficient quantity of igniting matter to burst the crust of our globe, and make it a ruin at our feet. And now for what object is this to be? Is there to be anything in the place of this materialism when it thus falls into ruin? Or are we to reside in a place altogether different from this our world—a place rather spiritual than material in the elements that compose it? "I beheld a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth were passed away." "We, therefore, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." In the first place, the incarnation of Christ would lead us to infer, I think, that we were destined to be material as well as spiritual in our final and everlasting state. You are to remember, again, that Christ when He rose from the dead did not fling away materialism for ever; on the contrary, His body came back to His spirit, just as ours shall come back. And not only so, but He now bears that glorified body in the courts of heaven. And we may conclude that if Christ has thus brought materialism up to the courts of God, if He not only walked the earth in a material body, but now resides in heaven in glorified materialism, materialism is destined to decay, only that it may be purified with the fires of the last day. But, again, this is only a natural inference to be drawn from another doctrine of the Christian religion—I mean the resurrection of the body. Thus we come to the conclusion that when St. John saw a new heaven and a new earth he saw what literally should come out of the ruins of the old. And then who can describe the beauty of such a residence as this? Scripture only gives us a glimpse into paradise. Methinks, perhaps, we could not understand what paradise was; we could not realise the beauty of its sounds, the richness of its sights, the glories of its landscape. And so Scripture only gives us a glimpse into the glories of our future home. But in order to make this more evident we would ask you to remark that there is to be not only a new earth, but a new heaven as well. We perhaps could understand that the

earth required renewing. It is inhabited by a sinful race. But you will naturally ask, Why does heaven require to be renewed—heaven, the residence of God. But we think you mistake in fancying that the heaven which is here stated to be renewed is the heaven wherein God dwells. We think, rather, it alludes to the firmamental space that surrounds this earth, and that what St. John means to assert is that not only does the earth become renewed by the process of the last fiery trial, but that also the atmosphere itself, the place wherein planets move, where the whole machinery of the stars is at work, that this place too is purged by a similar process. If so, we ask you, Does not imagination at once falter when we strive to conceive such a splendid spreading of materialism as this must throw open? Not only shall the earth, then, be clad with beauty, but there shall come a clearing process upon the air; and this shall so throw open the firmamental regions to man's view, and so render the planetary system visible, as to make the scene literally accord with the vision of St. John—a new heaven, as well as a new earth. II. WHAT SHALL BE THE PRE-EMINENT MARK AND CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ARRANGEMENTS AND INHABITANTS OF THIS GLORIOUS SCENE? St. Peter tells us, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness"; and we therefore infer that righteousness will be the characteristic of the future heavens and earth. If there was anything permitted there that was not thoroughly righteous—if there was anything like impurity infecting the region or sinfulness throwing its taint upon the scene, then in vain should we hope for such a beautiful residence. And thus there comes the practical question to ourselves, Are we or are we not fitted for such a scene as this? Fasten not your affections upon things below. Take them as God gives them to you: enjoy them as far as God allows you; but, remember, there is decay in everything you see. (*J. P. Waldo, B.A.*) *The new heaven and new earth*:—These words refer especially to the future. We all live in the future more or less; it is so full of possibilities of improvement that we are strongly disposed to dwell upon it. God has not allowed the future state to be wrapped entirely in mystery; enough has been revealed to inspire us to inquire into its glorious realities. I. THAT THERE IS A GREAT CHANGE TO TAKE PLACE IN THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH. 1. The new heaven implies that the future state will be suited to the soul in the fullest possible sense. There will be no night there—i.e., there will be no ignorance there. The "god of this world" will not have any power in "the new heaven," nor will any evil men or false teachers be found there to blind or delude the minds of the inhabitants. The state will be perfectly adapted to the redeemed soul. There will be no doubt there. Certitude will be the mental state of all in the future life; nor will there be any fear in that state. The deep mysteries of the future will not create any fear in the minds of the redeemed. There will be no falsehood in that state either; no one who loveth or doeth a lie shall enter into it: truth will be the very atmosphere of the place. There will be no such thing as a selfish emotion experienced by any soul in the "new heaven." Righteous principle will be the governing power in all. Neither will there be any hatred in the "new heaven." All will be sweet and harmonious reasonableness. 2. It will be suited to the body. It will be a state of established health and vigour. The "new earth" will abound in all the elements of true and pure strength. So perfect will the body, which we shall then possess, be in all its parts, that we shall never be conscious of any evil passions whatsoever. There will be no want in the "new earth." The "new earth" will be richly supplied with all that the new body will require; the new earth and the resurrection body will be most thoroughly fitted the one for the other. 3. The society of the future state will be of the purest and the best. The character of the inhabitants will be such that defection will be impossible. There will be great progression to fuller knowledge, larger views, and more comprehensive understanding of things spiritual and eternal. The very thought of it is an inspiration; what must an experience of it be? II. THAT THE FUTURE STATE WILL BE ONE OF VERY INTIMATE SPIRITUAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE. "The tabernacle of God will be with men." III. THAT THE FUTURE STATE WILL BE ENTIRELY FREE FROM ALL TRIAL. (*D. Rhys Jenkins.*) *The unending age of blessedness*:—I. IT WILL BE IN A SENSE A NEW STATE. 1. It may be physically new. 2. It may be dispensationally new. Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. 3. It may be relatively new. New in the estimation and feeling of the occupants. II. IT WILL BE A STATE WIDELY DIFFERING FROM ALL PRECEDING ONES. 1. The difference will arise from the absence of some things which were identified with all the preceding states. (1) All the elements of mental agitation—pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, doubt, fear, envy, guilt—will be excluded from heaven. (2) Death-

beds, funeral processions, cemeteries, are not known there. (3) Suffering. 2. This difference will arise from the presence of some things which have not been in connection with any preceding states. (1) A full manifestation of God. (2) A perfect fellowship with God. (a) Direct. (b) Permanent. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The new heaven and the new earth*:—1. Our future state of being will partake very largely of a material character. That is, we shall not exist in an invisible, impalpable condition, floating in ether, as some have fancifully supposed, or mysteriously suspended upon nothing. The soul and body are not two antagonistic beings, to be severed and divorced for all eternity. They are separated by death to be re-united at the resurrection. 2. Our occupation in a future state will be greatly influenced by material things. It would be unreasonable to attribute to the future life an entire absence of all those warm and sensible accompaniments which give expression and force to our present being. Christ did not come to take away all taste for the beautiful in nature, but to refine and elevate those powers by which we apprehend and appreciate the lovely and the sublime. Our capacity for investigating the works of God will not merely remain undestroyed, but be developed so as to meet the requirements of the new state of being. When we have made the material world minister to our wants; when we have gathered to our tables the produce of all lands, and when we have culled from the beauties of nature for the adornment of our homes—nay, further, when we have made the steam-power print for our use the ripest thoughts of the greatest minds, and when we have girdled the earth with an electric band, so that words of hearty friendship may be flashed as in a moment to the uttermost ends of the world—when we have done all this have we yet put the works of Omnipotence to their highest use? Are there not fields yet to be entered, regions yet to be explored, treasures yet to be discovered, harvests yet to be reaped? 3. We anticipate future opportunities to unravel the perplexities of a Divine providence. 4. The new earth, with its new and sinless life, will afford opportunity for the more perfect comprehension of the mysteries of grace. (*F. Wagstaff.*) *The new heaven and the new earth*:—I. THE SOURCES WHENCE THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN IS DERIVED. 1. The happiness of heaven will be derived from increased and perfected knowledge. On earth our residence is so short, our mental faculties are so limited, our hearts are so carnal, and our opportunities of acquiring knowledge are, in many cases, so few, that the wisest and the holiest know but little either of the character or the works of God. What sources of happiness will be afforded by the moral government of God, when we are permitted to read the sealed book of providence, and by the work of redemption, when, in the very presence of the Redeemer, we gaze upon its height and depth and length and breadth. 2. The happiness of heaven will be derived from holiness of character. Sin and misery are so connected that no mere change of place can sever them; and the mind of man is so much its own place that, if unsanctified, it would make a hell of heaven. 3. The happiness of heaven will be derived from the society of angels and the redeemed. 4. This happiness will be derived from the presence and friendship of Jesus Christ. 5 This happiness will be derived from the employments of the inhabitants. II. THE PECULIARITIES BY WHICH THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN WILL BE DISTINGUISHED. 1. The happiness of heaven will be perfect in its nature. That is, it will be free from every imperfection and alloy that mingles with our enjoyments here. 2. The happiness of heaven will be various in its degrees. There is a prophet's reward, and a righteous man's reward. 3. The happiness of heaven will be progressive and eternal. (*J. Alexander.*) *The future abode of the saints*:—None can deny that after the resurrection and the final judgment the just made perfect will not be, as angels, simply spiritual essences, but be endowed, as when on earth, with material bodies. Now material beings naturally presuppose a material locality; material sight would be simply useless unless there were material substances to see; material hearing, unless there were material sounds to hear. This obviates one great objection to what I am saying, that the whole Apocalyptic description is only the lowering of heavenly ideas to earthly minds. If a mere spiritual state were being described, doubtless it would be so; but when, to say the least, much that is material must be mixed up with it, the argument vanishes. Consider, again, the remarkable terms in which the abode of the elect is mentioned, after the final doom: "A new heaven and a new earth." And lest any one should think this is a mere casual expression of St. John's (granting that such things might be), St. Peter also and Isaiah speak of "new heavens and a new earth." If, now, there were no analogy between the old and the new, between the first and the second earth, to what purpose this particular and thrice-

repeated expression? And most remarkably it is said, "There was no more sea." There is, therefore, so strong a resemblance between the two earths, that the absence of the sea in the second is thought a point worthy of notice. Therefore, all the varieties of natural beauty, besides this, it may be presumed, still will exist. If of one thing in a series it is recorded that it is abolished, the natural presumption about the others is that they remain. And in the mystical descriptions of heaven with which Scripture abound, we find frequent references to the other most remarkable components of earthly scenery. To trees, for there is the tree of life; to mountains, for there is the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; to lakes, for there the glorious Lord will be a place of broad streams; to rivers, for there is the river of the water of life. Surely it is impossible to believe that these things are purely metaphorical; nor can it be even said that the expressions are used in a sacramental sense. (*J. M. Neale, D.D.*)

There was no more sea.—*Heaven without a sea*.:—1. There shall be in heaven no more trackless wastes. Over three-fourths of this whole globe is composed of a wild, cheerless, trackless waste of waters. The ship passes over it and leaves no trace of its route. The sun woos it, the zephyrs waft it, the dews and rains descend upon it, yet it produces no vegetation. How many human beings seem to spend useless lives, leaving the world no better nor happier than when they came into it! There is no corner for such supernumeraries in the New Jerusalem. Its inhabitants shall not spend eternity in doing little but to sing songs and wave palm branches; but in service, glorious service, for the great King. Great energies will not be expended, as too often in this life, in vain efforts. 2. There shall be in heaven no more devouring waves. 3. There shall be in heaven no buried secrets. The sea is full of concealment and mystery. The scientific explorer dredges out wondrous revelations from the bosom of its gloomy depths. In heaven all earthly secrets shall be revealed, and there shall be no more sea. 4. There shall be in heaven no restless existence. The changeful tides, the constant agitation of surface, the winds and hurricanes, the ever-shifting scenery of old ocean are a picture of human life, with its rises and falls, its joys and sorrows, its births and deaths, its successes and failures—fickle, transitory, uncertain, unsatisfactory human life. What, is it possible that all this agitation of time shall some day cease? Its unquiet of body, its tumult of mind, its yearning of soul all come to an end? Yes, in heaven, where "there is a rest for the people of God," a blessed calm, an eternal peace of soul in the presence of God. (*M. D. Kneeland, D.D.*)

No more sea.:—We know not whether there will be a literal physical sea or not in the future world. To the Apostle John, who doubtless, in common with all his countrymen, looked upon the sea with dread, the absence of it in the heavenly vision may have been welcomed as a relief. All the allusions to the sea in the Bible refer solely to its power or danger—never to its æsthetic aspects; and many, especially those to whom the sea has proved cruel, may sympathise with this prejudice, and rejoice to accept the announcement in all its literality, that in heaven there shall be no more sea. To others, again, whose earliest and sweetest associations are connected with its shelly shores and its gleaming waters, a world without a sea would seem a world without life or animation, without beauty or attraction—a blank, silent realm of desolation and death. I. The existence of the sea implies SEPARATION. The sea, along with its accompanying lakes and rivers, is in this world the great divider. In the peculiar arrangements of land and water on the surface of the earth we have a clear and unmistakable evidence of God's intention from the very beginning of separating mankind into distinct nationalities. For this separation a twofold necessity suggests itself. It exercised a restraining and a constraining influence. Had mankind been permitted to remain for an indefinite period in one narrow region of the earth, brought into close and constant communication with each other, and speaking the same language, the consequences would have been most disastrous. They would have inevitably corrupted one another. Family and individual interests would have come into frequent and violent collision. Their proximity would have been the occasion of endless wars and deeds of violence and bloodshed. God, therefore, mercifully interfered; He separated mankind into distinct nations, placed them in different scenes and circumstances, and effectually kept them apart by means of seas and trackless oceans; and thus the maddening passions of man were rendered comparatively innocuous, or circumscribed within the narrowest possible limits. Another reason for this separation of the human race by means of the sea was that national character might thus be formed and educated—that the one type of human nature might develop itself into every pos-

sible modification by the force of different circumstances and experiences. If there were no individuality among nations mankind could make no progress; all human societies would lose the mental activity, the noble competition, the generous emulation which distinguish them; there would be no mutual instruction, nothing to keep in check local evils, and by the better agencies of one region stimulate into action similar agencies in another. And it is a remarkable circumstance that this barrier continued insurmountable while the infant races were receiving the education and undergoing the discipline that were to qualify them for enlarged intercourse with each other. When, however, the day appointed by God to enlighten and emancipate the world approached, the sea became all at once, through the improvement of navigation and ship-building, the great highway of nations, the great channel of communication between the different and distant parts of the world. Christianity is rapidly melting the separate nationalities into one; but the fusion of these discordant elements into one glorious harmony, pure as sunlight, inspiring as a strain of perfect music, will never be accomplished in this world. "And there was no more sea." Methinks these words must have had a deep and peculiar significance to the mind of the old fisherman when we think of the circumstances in which he was placed when he wrote them. A touching tradition pictures the aged apostle going day after day to an elevated spot on the ocean-rock, to which, Prometheus-like, he was chained, and casting a longing look over the wide waste of waters, as if by thus gazing he could bring nearer to his heart, if not to his sight, the beloved land and the cherished friends for whom he pined. The cause of his beloved Master needed the aid of every faithful arm and heart, but he could do nothing. Oh! a feeling of despondency must have often seized him when he thought of all from which the cruel sea divided him. And when the panorama of celestial scenery was spread out before his prophetic eye, to compensate him for the trials of banishment, with what joy, methinks, must he have seen that from horizon to horizon there was no sea there—nothing to separate—nothing to prevent the union and communion of those whom the grace of Christ had made free, and His power had transferred to that "large place"! "And there was no more sea." Do not these words come home to our own hearts with peculiar tenderness of meaning? For what home is there whose circle of happy faces is complete, from which no wanderer has gone forth to the ends of the earth? Heaven is the land of eternal reunion. The friends who bade reluctant farewell to each other on earth, and dwelt apart with wide seas rolling between, shall meet on the eternal shore to separate no more for ever. II. "And there was no more sea." These words imply that in heaven there shall be no more CHANGE. The sea is the great emblem of change. There is nothing in the world more uncertain and unstable. Now it lies calm and motionless as an inland lake—without a ripple on its bosom; and now it tosses its wild billows mountains high, and riots in the fury of the storm. And not only is it the emblem of change: it is itself the cause, directly or indirectly, of nearly all the physical changes that take place in the world. We cannot name a single spot where the sea has not some time or other been. Every rock that now constitutes the firm foundation of the earth was once dissolved in its waters, lay as mud at its bottom, or as sand and gravel along its shore. The materials of our houses were once deposited in its depths, and are built on the floor of an ancient ocean. What are now dry continents were once ocean-beds; and what are now sea-beds will be future continents. Everywhere the sea is still at work—encroaching upon the shore—undermining the boldest cliffs by its own direct agency. And where it cannot reach itself, it sends its emissaries to the heart of deserts, and the summits of mountain ranges, and the innermost recesses of continents—there to produce constant dilapidation and change. Viewed in this light there is a striking appropriateness in there being no more sea in the eternal world. Heaven is the land of stability and permanence. There will be progress, but not change; growth, but not decay. There will be no ebb and flow—no waxing and waning—no rising and setting—no increasing and diminishing in the life of heaven. There will be perfect fulness of rest in the changeless land where there is no more sea. III. The existence of the sea implies the existence of STORMS. And is not this life, even to the most favoured individuals, a dark and rainy sea, with only here and there a few sunlit isles of beauty and peace, separated by long and troubled voyages? There are many outward storms that beat upon us in this world—storms of adversity arising from personal, domestic, or business causes; as soon as one blows past, another is ready to assail us. And there are inward storms—storms of religious doubt, of conscience, of temptation, and, worse than any of these, the raging of our

own corrupt affections and unsubdued desires. Between these two seas many of us are scarcely ever allowed to know what a calm means. But amid all these storms we are strengthened and consoled by the assurance that they are necessary, and are appointed to work together for good. Yet still we long for their cessation, and look forward with joyful hope to the region of everlasting peace. In heaven there will be no stormy winds or raging waters. Through the shoals and the breakers, and the sunken rocks of those perilous worldly seas, the Christian voyagers, some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, will escape all safe to land—and there shall be no more sea. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *No more sea* :—I. NO MORE

PAINFUL MYSTERY. We look out upon the broad ocean, and far away it seems to blend with air and sky. Mists come up over its surface. Suddenly there rises on the verge of the horizon a white sail that was not there a moment ago; and we wonder, as we look out from our hills, what may be beyond these mysterious waters. And to these ancient peoples there were mysteries which we do not feel. Whither should they come, if they were to venture on its untried tides? And then, what lies in its sunless caves that no eye has seen? It swallows up life and beauty and treasure of every sort, and engulphs them all in its obstinate silence. What should we see if depth and distance were annihilated, and we beheld what there is out yonder, and what there is down there? And is not our life ringed round in like manner with mystery? Oh! to some hearts surely this ought to come as not the least noble and precious of the thoughts of what that future life is—"there shall be no more sea"; and the mysteries that come from God's merciful limitation of our vision, and some of the mysteries that come from God's wise and providential interposition of obstacles to our sight shall have passed away. II. NO MORE REBELLIOUS POWER. God lets people work against His kingdom in this world. It is not to be always so. The kingdom of God is in the earth, and the kingdom of God admits of opposition. Strange! But the opposition, even here on earth, all comes to nothing. Men may work against God's kingdom, the waves may rave and rage; but beneath them there is a mighty tidal sweep, and God's purposes are wrought out, and God's ark comes to "its desired haven," and all opposition is nugatory at the last. But there comes a time, too, when there shall be no more violence of rebellious wills lifting themselves against God. The opposition that lies in all our hearts shall one day be subdued. The whole consent of our whole being shall yield itself to the obedience of sons, to the service of love. III. NO MORE DISQUIET AND UNREST. Surely some of us are longing to find anchorage whilst the storm lasts, and a haven at the end. There is one, if only you will believe it, and set yourselves towards it. There is an end to all "the weary oar, the weary wandering fields of barren foam." On the shore stands the Christ; and there is rest there. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *No more sea* :—This fact can be read physically.

It would be the easiest reading, but perhaps not the only one, nor the most satisfying and helpful one. Rendered physically, it would neither satisfy curiosity nor offer stimulus. It would add nothing practically to our knowledge of the future, because we know nothing of the other physical conditions with which this fact of sealessness would stand in relation; and no fact means anything when standing alone. Every man in conceiving the things which are eternal has to think in terms of time; and in conceiving the things which are celestial has to think in terms of earth. In our most spiritual moods we cannot get away from our common surroundings or from our every-day vocabulary. We have only one language in which to phrase present experience and heavenly anticipations. The finest pictures which our thought paints of the things which are unseen and eternal are done in tints gathered from off a pallet of earthly colour. If we are weary, then heaven means rest; if we are sin-sick, then heaven means holiness; if we are lonely, then heaven means reunion with the loved ones that have gone on before. If any kind of barrier invests us, we think that in heaven that barrier will be erased. In the sailor-boy's dream of home, no buffeting waves or tempestuous sea divide longer between him and the old hearthstone. For the time being there is with him no more sea. Now there are many phases of life, many limitations by which we are hedged in, upon which this sentiment of our text falls with a singular power of stimulus and of comfort, and the more completely these waters of separation sunder us, and exile us from our soul's object, the more richly freighted with fruition does the new and the sealess city become to us. There are in the first place our physical limitations, by which we are so many of us so closely and painfully walled. Much of our severity and acidity is only indigestion become a mental fact, and a good deal of our solicitude and distrust are no more than an enfeebled condition of the

blood telling upon the spirit. The body made to be the helpmeet of the soul is become its adversary. Much of sin is the offspring of the body. Redemption and immortality are as much of the body as of the mind. Then there are our mental limitations. Men want to know, but they do not know how to know. Our philosophy is tentative. Thinking is trying experiments mostly. We think different things at different times, and no two men think the same thing, as no two eyes see the same rainbow. And then most of that which we do know is of things that are going to last but a little; as it were, a gathering of wilting flowers. All knowledge is transient, that is, of things that are transient, as the splendour fades from off the hills as the sun passes under the west. There are also our moral limitations. Holiness is yonder, and there is a great gulf fixed. We can abstain from acts of sin, but do not succeed in becoming clean through and through. Our wishes outrun our attainments. Our bodies hold us back; our past holds us back; our surroundings detain us. We want it should become our nature to do right. Holiness lies in the future, but it is a sure fact of the future, and our wall of moral separation shall be broken down, our exile repealed, the island made continuous with the continent, and no more sea in the New City of God. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*)

No more sea:—I. THERE WILL BE NO MORE MYSTERY. 1. Our life is a mystery—birth, health, sickness, death. 2. Revelation is a mystery—prophecy, miracles, Calvary. 3. Providence is a mystery—prosperity of ungodly, adversity of the godly, death of children, war. II. THERE WILL BE NO MORE TROUBLE. The sea a picture of our life—restless, stormy. 1. Business troubles. 2. Domestic troubles—an erring son, bereavement. 3. Personal troubles—disease of body, perplexity of mind about religion, spiritual needs. III. THERE WILL BE NO MORE IMPURITY. IV. THERE WILL BE NO MORE DANGER. 1. Danger from pernicious books. 2. Danger from evil companions. 3. Danger from Satanic influences. V. THERE WILL BE NO MORE HIDDEN LIFE. VI. THERE WILL BE NO MORE SEPARATION. (*A. Gray Maitland.*)

The world without a sea:—I. THERE IS NO DIVISION THERE. How much there is in this world that divides men! There are—1. Social caste. 2. National prejudices. 3. Religious sectarianism. 4. Selfish interests. 5. Mutual misunderstandings. None of these will exist in heaven. II. THERE IS NO MUTATION THERE. The only change is that of progress. 1. Progress in higher intelligence. 2. In loftier services. 3. In nobler fellowship. No change in the way of loss. The crown, the kingdom, the inheritance—all imperishable. III. THERE IS NO AGITATION THERE. Human life here has many storms. In how many hearts does deep call upon deep, and billows of sorrow roll over the soul! In heaven there are no spiritual storms. (*Homilist.*)

The sealess world:—St. John saw that the sea, whilst a great and essential good on earth, might in some aspects be regarded as an emblem of what was evil, and therefore undesirable. I. THE SEA IS EMBLEMATIC OF SEPARATION. Think of receiving a cablegram to-day telling that, say in Australia, a loved mother or child was lying dying and calling for you. How keenly you would feel the barrier set by the sea!

II. THE SEA IS EMBLEMATIC OF PERIL. Some of the saddest wrecks on record have taken place on our coasts. The sea, therefore, is a fit type of peril. Now "the sea is no more" in heaven, and so there is no occasion of hurt, no cause of danger, no need for anxiety. We move amid perils now. III. THE SEA IS EMBLEMATIC OF COMMOTION. The sea is never still. Even at its calmest there are ebbings and flowings, and sometimes in storm the disturbance is very great. We have our calms, but also our storms. A life of uninterrupted prosperity would be good for none of us. But the heavenly experience is better than earth's best. When we reach the land of light the need of testing shall be past, and the reason for discipline shall have vanished away. And so "the sea shall be no more." (*G. Gladstone.*)

Why there will be no more sea:—St. John writes of the blessed life of the new creation, where holy souls are at rest, that there is "no more sea." What was the sea, then, to him—what is it everywhere—that he should choose it to symbolise something that is unheavenly—something that is to be done away with when that which is perfect is come? I. The sea is that which sunders man from man. It divides nation from nation, as well as land from land. Whatever the original unity of the race, it breaks that unity apart. That is the very epithet that a Latin poet (Horace), who lived just before St. John's time, applied to it—the "dissociable" ocean. So long as the seas intervene, this is a divided world. The family of souls cannot be literally one; the universal neighbourhood and brotherhood at which the gospel aims cannot be actually represented till the first earth is passed away and there is no more sea. But if there is one thought that lies

nearer the heart of the gospel than any other, it is that of the perfect oneness, or flowing together, and living together, of the nations and souls of men. The blessed bond of that harmony began, in fact, to be woven when Christ was born, and the angels predicted peace at His coming, at Bethlehem. We know well enough how slowly the consummation has advanced against wars, crusades, caste, slavery, the complicated injustices and wrongs of a selfish society! Hereafter it will not be so. Hatreds, suspicions, oppressions, cruelties, quarrels, are all to be swept away. The spirit of Christ's mediation shall be the reigning force. So much for the society at large. Think, too, of the heavenly comfort it must bring to private hearts to have all the sorrows of personal separations ended. There will be no empty rooms that feel empty, or deserted hearts. Communion, fellowship, love, the presence of the loved, will be perpetual. II. There is a second character of the sea which probably likewise suggested it to St. John, for Christian comfort, as an image of what is of the earth earthy, and must therefore pass away before the coming in of an everlasting satisfaction. The ocean is all a field of nothing but barrenness. Nobody makes a home on that restless, fluctuating floor. The sailor is a ceaseless fugitive. Nothing settles or abides on that restless breast. All the life it ever sees or supports is a transitional, passing life, moving from one tarrying-place or coast to another. What an image it is of the fickle and transient elements of this world that now is, compared with the fixedness and stability and blooming life of that which Christ has opened! More than this: there is a key to this second part of the meaning of the text in the closing passage of the chapter that goes just before. "The sea gave up the dead which were in it." The sea is a great graveyard. It is the home of the drowned and buried that it has swallowed up by thousands. And it never allows affection to set up a sign where the dead go down. There is no harvest from it, except the harvest of the resurrection. But then, following this scene of the judgment is the new creation, and when the Evangelist comes just after to speak of that, his mind goes back to the sepulchral sea. And lo! it is gone for ever. In other words, dropping the figure, that new world—the Christian home—is all a dwelling-place of life—life everywhere; life without sleep; life for ever. Desolations and destructions are come to a perpetual end. Everything there must be as useful as it is beautiful, and as fruitful as it is fair. You may say there is a wild and wondrous beauty about the ocean; and no doubt in this material world it has its uses; but neither the gospel in this world nor the evangelic descriptions of the next recognise any beauty that is not the source of peace, or life, or benefaction. Heathen beauty, Greek beauty, cold, restless, faithless intellectual beauty, must be baptized into the warm "spirit of life" in Christ Jesus, or there is no room for it in the heaven Christ opens. (*Bp. F. D. Huntington.*) *The sea*:—I. Some of the many present uses of "THE SEA." Among other special particulars, and most material, one of the most prominent that strikes us is, it causes under Providence—1. The fertility of the earth. 2. The temperature of climates. How serviceable are its gales, and how refreshing are its breezes, especially after the burthen and heat of the summer's day! 3. Employment and sustenance to man. The first followers and chosen disciples of our Lord were chiefly "fishermen." 4. Intercourse with foreign and distant lands. Again, the sea—5. Affords security and defence for weaker states, and enables them to withstand the encroachments of their more powerful neighbours. 6. It signally subverts the purposes of its Creator. "Fire and vapour, storm and tempest, all fulfil the Almighty's word." Once the sea arose, "the deeps were broken up, and the foundations of the earth were discovered," in order to destroy the world. II. Some EMBLEMS taken from "the sea." In other words, the instructive lessons it particularly gives. 1. It reveals somewhat of the Divine perfections. Doth it not remind us continually of His power, His mercy, and His judgments? How widely spread, how fathomless! 2. The sea represents the varied characters of men. 3. The vicissitudes of human life. 4. The state and circumstances of the world. III. Some EVENTS either literally or figuratively represented as fulfilled—"there shall be no more sea." 1. No more dangers! no more hazards, likened to "perils on the sea." 2. No more trials, deceptions, errors, mistakes, and persecutions from the world! 3. No more concealment of, or the keeping from us what is agreeable, and of which we would desire the possession. 4. No more straitened limits and bounded habitations. 5. No more estrangement from our brethren. 6. No more separation from our friends. 7. No longer any distance (any of our present intervening barriers) between the Christian and his God. (*W. Williams, M.A.*) *No more sea*:—1. The sea, to St. John and the men of his day, was a great barrier

of separation. We must remember that the art of navigation was not then what it is to-day. Think of the ships of the ancients as compared with ours; think of them probably without either chart or mariner's compass. All this is changed now. The sea, instead of being a barrier, has become the great highway of the nations. But we have to remember what the sea was to St. John. It was a type, an emblem of things that divided men. There was the sea of racial hatred, of selfish interests, of false religions, of cruel prejudice, of bitter animosities. To the Jew every Gentile was a natural enemy, an outcast, a dog of the uncircumcision. To the Greek the people of other nations were barbarians. To the Romans all but their own countrymen were *hostes*, towards whom enmity was the approved relation. And how much of this continues to this day! We see it in the grasping policy of chartered companies and of statesmen, in the competitions of modern commerce, in the deadly warfare between capital and labour, in the bitterness of sectarian life, in the jealousies and rivalries of social life and the domestic circle. 2. The sea, to St. John, was doubtless a source of fear and terror. The Jews seem to have had no love for the mighty deep. They invariably looked upon it with dread and awe. St. John appears to have shared the sentiment of his countrymen. From his desolate island he had gazed upon the sea in its many and ever-changing moods. His mind associated the most terrible objects with it. It was out of the sea that he saw arise the wild beast having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads the name of Blasphemy. It was on the many waters of the deep that he saw seated that purple-clad woman who had upon her forehead written, "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." To him the sea was a type of the confederate forces of evil that were sweeping over the world, spreading ruin and desolation; of the fearful storms that were breaking in upon the infant Church. But it was only to last for a season. Gradually the wild instincts of the human heart would be subdued. The fierce billows of opposition and wickedness and unbelief would be hushed and stilled. They had their limits fixed: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." There should be "no more sea." 3. The sea was a type of the world's unrest. That Ægean Sea, laving the rocky island of Patmos, like the great ocean everywhere, was never still. Whenever he looked out upon it, its waters were heaving and tossing to and fro. A picture of the disquietude of the human spirit apart from God. He had felt it himself before he became a disciple of Jesus Christ: he had seen it in the life of his countrymen, in the life of the philosophers he had met at Ephesus, in the life of that Roman world with which, in various ways, he had been brought into contact. Unrest was the sign everywhere. The world was full of a restless life, of longings and questionings and yearnings it could not still. And the sea described that restlessness better than anything else. And John turned with relief from the troubled scene which everywhere presented itself to the rest-giving work of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. 4. The sea was a symbol of mystery. It was specially so to the ancients with their limited knowledge of its vast confines and of the wonders and glories of its fathomless depths. Think of the mountains that lie beneath the surface of the deep; of the life with which it teems; of the towns and villages it has engulfed; of its myriads of nameless graves; of the secrets it keeps; of tales it has to unfold. Oh, sea! thy name is mystery. And the mystery of which the sea speaks meets us everywhere. Find a man who is not awed with a perception of life's mysteriousness, and you have found a man who has never seriously begun to think. No sooner do I ask, "What am I? Whence came I? Why am I here? Whither am I going?" than I am conscious that I am in the presence of profound and inscrutable mysteries. Why should there be disease and pain? Why do the innocent suffer with the guilty? What was the origin of evil, and why was it permitted to enter the world? Why does a good and wise Providence allow storm and tempest to overtake men? And here is our comfort, that John foresaw a time when the mysteries of life shall be swallowed up in knowledge. No longer will the great sea of doubt or mystery roll over us; we shall know as we are known, the day shall break, and the shadows flee away, and the dark, impenetrable waters shall be no more. (J. H. Burkitt.)

Ver. 2. *The holy city, New Jerusalem.*—*The descent of the New Jerusalem*;—When tired of the turmoils of the present, how delightful it is to look up and hear, from the blessed source of all transgression, "Behold, I make all things new!" (chap. xxi. 5). All things—science, literature, arts, philosophies, commerce, trade, inter-

course between countries and provinces, and above all, in religion—all things will be made new. This new golden age belongs to a more interior Christianity than earth has yet received: an inner city for the soul, which was imaged by that which John saw, a golden city and a crystal one, descending from the Lord out of heaven, a New Church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Some are startled when they hear of a new Church; yet nothing can be plainer than that such a Church was in due time to be given to men. Jerusalem in the Scriptures signifies the Church: a New Jerusalem must therefore mean a New Church. The magnificent city beheld in spirit by John was a grand symbol of the future new and glorious Church which would bless the earth. It is to descend from God, the Father of His people and the Author of all good out of heaven. It does not originate with man. When the Lord came into the world and planted the kingdom of God within men, as He said (Luke xvii. 20, 21), it is foretold by the prophet in similar terms to those used by John, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth," &c. (Isa. lxx. 17, 18). To alter the state of society altogether, both as to its principles and practices, is to change heaven and earth. "If any man be in Christ," said Paul, "he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). And, indeed, when this happy change takes place with any one individually, he feels all things to have a new face and a new reality for him. His view of the Lord is altogether bright and new, where it had before been dark and threatening. His thoughts, his hopes, his prospects, are altogether confident and cheerful, and his outward life is new and virtuous. And may we not look around now, and ask, Is it not so? Has not society, even now, immensely changed? Where are the old bigoted principles which taught men to go out and persecute, and even destroy others, in the name of God? Where all the old maxims which taught each nation to regard others as their natural enemies, and to injure and destroy their power and their trade as a patriotic act and a duty? Where are the selfish maxims which confined power and privilege to a few to whom all others should slavishly bend? These are all gone, or rapidly going; and, instead of their unholy reign, we see constantly advanced and constantly extending sentiments of brotherhood, of reverential remembrance that we are all children of One who is our Father and our Saviour. Every year the mutual intercourse of nations, and the good-will which is its attendant, are extending, and, aided by the victorious march of steam and telegraph, will no doubt ere long unite all nations in the ties of mutual love. A new heaven and a new earth are indeed appearing. And now, therefore, is the time that the New Jerusalem may be expected. Oh, what a hope and a blessing for mankind are unfolded by the descent of this city of God! To those who enter it the perplexities of ages are ended. Enmity gives way to love, anxiety to trust, and crime to virtue. God in His Divine humanity dwells with men. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. (*J. Bailey, Ph.D.*) *Heaven*:—"I saw the holy city." The words are allegorical of course. But they signify something in which we all believe. A city is a real thing. Not the less real if it be heavenly. "The holy city" is what we commonly call heaven. I. HEAVEN IS A STATE. It is not a place. It may or may not be connected with space: we know not. Certainly that is not its essence. Where God is, where Christ is, there is heaven. If even it have a place, that is not what makes it heaven. Even already, even in this life, we have had experience that neither place nor yet circumstance is a condition of happiness. Such glimpses of happiness as we catch below, whether in others or in ourselves, are absolutely independent of both. Heaven is a state—a state of happiness; of perfect satisfaction for the whole man, in body, soul, and spirit; the entire absence for ever of all that is painful and bitter and sorrowful, and the conscious, the pervading presence of all that is restful and delightful and blessed. II. HEAVEN IS A SOCIETY. On the one side we have had trying experiences in this world of companies and co-existences which were not delightful. The wear and tear of life, the rubs and jars of life, the annoyances and wearinesses of life, are connected in our thoughts not with solitude but with society. But when we speak of heaven, of the Holy City, as a society, we must carefully exclude all these experiences. In heaven there will be perfect communion of mind with mind, heart with heart, spirit with spirit. 1. In his vision of the great multitude which no man could number he gives this as the history of them all (chap. vii. 14). 2. There will be this also—a unity of employment (chaps. xiv. 4; xxii. 3). There will be no monotony there—but there will be unbroken harmony; harmony not of praise only but of work. 3. This unity of memory, and this unity of employment in the holy city, will be,

further, and yet more briefly, a unity of worship. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The New Jerusalem* :—But why a New Jerusalem? Because the old one failed of its purpose, and was spoiled by the wickedness of man. What is the idea of Jerusalem as depicted in the Bible? Simply a city where everything is at peace because it is under the full enjoyment of God's presence, a city which is safe and happy because it allows itself to be guided and ruled by God in every detail. As, however, this old Jerusalem failed of its object, it is the work of God in the Christian dispensation to form a new one. And this is going on now; we are still hoping for and working towards the New Jerusalem. But God does not tell us merely to look forward to it. Just as in the wilderness He was with His people, foreshadowing the glory of Jerusalem in the glory of the tabernacle, so now He is still going about with humanity. We are not, then, to look forward to a Jerusalem as something which will be entirely new, or to a heaven which will be absolutely strange, but rather it is our duty in this world to build up a social life upon such principles as we know will form the basis of life in the future state. There are three great principles appearing over and over again in the Apocalypse in its references to this heavenly society, the New Jerusalem; and the first is that it is a life of brotherhood, of social brotherhood. All the beings to be found there are of one mind, of one heart and soul, before the throne of God, all singing one song, all clothed in the same dress. They are a great brotherhood banded together with but one aim, one desire—and that the glory of Almighty God. The second great principle of the New Jerusalem is the awfulness of sin; over and over again we are told that out of it must be cast everything that is unclean; every sin must be banished. God Almighty is the Light of it, and He cannot look upon impurity. Once more, the third great principle is the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ. Who is the object of worship in heaven? Who is on the throne whom all the saints and angels are worshipping and adoring? Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. In the New Jerusalem there is but one object of adoration—the Lord Jesus. There is but one beginning and ending, but one answer to every question—Christ. What we want is greater faith in Jesus Christ; a greater belief that God is as good as His word, and that though the world does present a very sorry appearance, and though the Church may seem to be an utter failure, still God is on His throne, and Jesus is interceding for us, and the saints and angels are on our side. But remember, we must be true to our part of the transaction; He needs our co-operation, and it is only by thus working together that we shall produce the New Jerusalem. (*Jas. Adderley, M.A.*) *The first city and the last* (with Gen. iv. 17) :—In Genesis we have the first city built by Cain, in Revelation the last city built by Christ. I wish to show how the spirit of Christ will purify and exalt city life, how it will arrest the evil of the multitude within the city walls, how it will develop the good, and bring the corporate life to a glorious perfection. It was said of Augustus that he found Rome brick and left it marble; but Christ shall work a far grander transformation, for, finding the cities of the earth cities of Cain, He shall change them into New Jerusalems, holy cities, cities of God. We must not look for the city that John saw in some future world, strange and distant; we must look for it in the purification of the present order. Now, what makes a great city a sad sight? what is the cause of its terrible and perplexing contrasts? and how will Christ cure these evils, and bring the clean thing out of the unclean? I. The spirit of Cain was the spirit of **UNGODLINESS**. It was the spirit of worldliness, it was the fastening to the earthly side of things, and the leaving out of the spiritual and Divine: it made material life a substitute for God, and in all things aimed to make man independent of God. In opposition to this Christ brings into city life the element of spirituality. "Coming down out of heaven from God." It is in the recognition of the living God that Christ creates the fairer civilisation. He puts into our heart assurance of God's existence, government, watchfulness, equity, faithfulness. II. The spirit of Cain was the spirit of **UNBROTHERLINESS**. The first city was built in the spirit of a cruel egotism, built by a fratricide, and Cain's red finger-marks are on the city still. The rich things of commerce are stained by extortion and selfishness—the bloody finger-marks are not always immediately visible, but they are generally there. Yes, the foundation-stone of the city was laid on the corpse of a brother, and ever since has the city been built up in the spirit of rapacity, ambition, and cruelty. And what is the outcome of this selfishness? It creates everywhere weakness and wretchedness and peril. It throws a strange black shadow on all the magnificence of civilisation. And in the end, whatever has the stain of blood on it rots and smells and perishes. The

spirit of Christ is the spirit of brotherliness. There are red marks once more on the new city, but this time they are the Builder's own blood, teaching us that as He laid down His life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Oh! what a mighty difference will the working of this spirit make in all our civilisation! How it will inspire men, soften their antagonisms, lighten their burdens, wipe away their tears, make rough places smooth, dark places bright, crooked places plain. III. The spirit of Cain was the spirit of UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. Cain acted in untruthfulness, injustice, violence. Our great populations are full of wretchedness, because there is everywhere such lack of truth and equity and mercy. The spirit of Christ is the spirit of righteousness. Christ comes not only with the sweetness of love, but with the majesty of truth and justice. He creates, wherever He is received, purity of heart, conscientiousness, faithfulness, uprightness of spirit and action. And in this spirit of righteousness shall we build the ideal city. Some time ago, in one of the Reviews, a writer gave a picture of the London of the future, when all sanitary and political improvements shall have been perfected. No dust in the streets, no smoke in the air, no noise, no fog, spaces everywhere for flowers and sunlight, the sky above always pure, the Thames running below a tide of silver; but think of the city of the future in whose life, laws, institutions, trade, politics, pleasure the righteousness of Christ shall find full and final manifestation. Where is the poet, the painter who shall paint for us that golden city so holy and clean? It is painted for us here; it is "the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven," &c. (W. L. Watkinson.)

Ver. 3. *The tabernacle of God is with men.—The elimination of the law of antagonism* (with Isa. xxviii. 21):—I. THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM IS UNNATURAL. Some great thinkers maintain that nature is altogether good and glorious. A distinguished scientist reminds us of "that gracious Nature to whom man yearns with filial instinct, knowing her, in spite of fables, to be his dear mother (Ray Lankester, "Degeneration," p. 67). On the other hand, equally able men teach that nature is malefic and abominable. J. S. Mill in a famous passage paints nature as teeming with amazing cruelty and terror. In the opinion of the Gold Coast people a large spider made the world, and the philosopher would have readily agreed that it bore many marks of such creation. So widely different is the interpretation of the world given by these thinkers, that it is hardly possible to believe that they are speaking of the same object. Which view, then, is correct? We say both, and taken together they express the view of the world given in the Christian revelation; the conclusions of philosophy agree with the theology of the Church. Revelation declares that the world as it existed in the thought of God, as it came from the hand of God, was "very good." The constitution of things was altogether gracious; the original order was full of harmony, loveliness, and blessing. It was just like God to make a world like that which arises with music and splendour upon our delighted senses in the beginning of revelation. A world so garnished and ordered agrees with our conceptions of the Divine wisdom and goodness. Over such an orb well might the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. Our first text reminds us that God sometimes executes what must be described as "strange work"; that is, work which seems altogether at variance with His glorious character, and with the acknowledged principles of His government. Now we affirm that the whole present government of this world partakes largely of this character; it is a "strange work" to meet an extraordinary crisis. The sweating, the groaning, the bleeding, the dying, all the tragic aspects of life, do not belong to the Divine eternal order; they are the consequences, not of the laws of God, but of the violation of those laws, and they exist only locally and temporally for ends of discipline, lesser evils permitted and overruled for the prevention of greater. If, entering a house, we find a father speaking angrily to his child, taking away his toys, limiting his liberty, chastising him with the rod, we know that all this is contrary to parental feeling, an interruption of the common beautiful order—that it is a "strange work" directed to specific, pressing, necessary ends; so we believe it to be with this present epoch of world-suffering—it is God's strange act necessitated by our disobedience, still overruled by His love. II. IT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST TO ABOLISH THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." The Deity is revealed to us in the Man Christ Jesus, who brings us into loving relationship with God, and into loving relationship with one another, thus banishing the world's disorder and distress. In

His life and death we have the supreme illustration of unselfishness. The grand burden of His gospel is love, mercy, pity; it is the most eloquent plea for charity, sympathy, humanity. And by the power of His Spirit He breaks down in men that tyranny of selfishness which is the secret of all our woes, and enthrones within our soul the power of love. He utterly destroys in the heart of man the egotism, pride, greed, envy, wrath, which render the emulations of society so bitter and destructive. But the question may be urged, What is to guarantee our safety and progress when the fiery law is abolished? The prevalence of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Universal love shall take the place of antagonism in the discipline of the race. In the individual life we find a ready and apposite illustration of the passage from the lower law of action to a higher. In the days of youth we were kept to duty by the austerity of our masters; a whole system of minute and coercive discipline was necessary to overcome our laziness, our love of indulgence, our waywardness. The law of antagonism, as we encountered it in the schoolroom, was very bitter indeed to some of us; yet we now know it was essential to our progress that we should have been subjected to such coercion. But, growing into men, we conceived a passion for knowledge, art, business, duty; larger views opened to us; nobler motives began to make themselves felt, a sense of dignity and responsibility was created in us; the spur within took the place of the spur without, and the whole work of life is now done in a far freer, happier spirit. In Christ we receive the adoption of sons, the inheritance of brothers, and as the spirit of Christ prevails, the race will be controlled by the milder yet stronger principle. The energy of love will replace the energy of hate; the energy of hope, the energy of fear; the energy of disinterestedness, the energy of selfishness; the energy of joy, the energy of suffering: the energy of conscience and righteousness, the energy of lawless passion. III. THE LAW OF ANTAGONISM IS BEING ELIMINATED. One of the most remarkable features of modern thought is its deep discontent with the law of antagonism. We are greatly and increasingly pained by the spectacle of universal strife and suffering. We are told that for various reasons the agony of the world is not so great as it seems, that nature knows no morality, that the splendid results justify the bloody battle; these and other excuses are urged in extenuation and defence of the principle of antagonism. But we refuse to be comforted; we will not reconcile ourselves to such a ghastly state of things; we decline to believe that such infinite sorrows are normal and inevitable. We may well believe with Emerson, "This great discontent is the elegy of our loss, and the prediction of our recovery." We see signs of change to a happier state of things in our relation to nature. We are beginning to understand much better the laws and forces of the physical universe; we are rapidly learning how gloriously the elements and creatures may serve us: nay, in the fields of nature we discover how more and more to gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock"; "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fig tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree." A celebrated traveller concludes a famous book with these pregnant words: "The superiority of the bleak north to tropical regions is only in their social aspect; for I hold to the opinion that, although humanity can reach an advanced state of culture only by battling with the inclemencies of nature in high latitudes, it is under the equator alone that the perfect race of the future will attain to complete fruition of man's beautiful heritage, the earth." Only by battling with the inclemencies of nature can man reach an advance state of culture, but having reached that intellectual and moral perfection, he will under the equator enter into complete fruition of his beautiful heritage. How much all this sounds like the teaching of the Bible! The bleak north makes us, and, being made, the perfect race enters into the paradises reserved for it beneath the sun. And there is much in modern life to indicate how easily all this may come to pass. We see signs of change to a happier state of things within society itself. A process of amelioration is going on everywhere. There is an attempt to get more justice, fairness, and even mercy, into commercial rivalries; to substitute some plan of co-operation for the existing competition, if that is possible. Signs of change to a happier state of things are visible also in international life. There is growing up with wonderful rapidity a sense of the brotherhood of man; a larger and purer patriotism. Salvator Rosa long ago painted his picture, "Peace burning the Instruments of War." This generation may not witness that glorious bonfire, but many signs signify that ere long it shall be kindled, lighting the footsteps of the race into the vaster glory that is to be. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The tabernacle of God*:—I. THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN. 1. Throughout this

whole book we find continual reference to the temple service of the Jews. This furnishes some of its most striking symbols. Thus we have an altar, incense, priests clothed in white, cherubim, and the sacred presence of God. 2. This symbol of the tabernacle denotes the personal approach of the saints to God. 3. This allusion to the tabernacle also instructs us that part of the felicity of heaven will consist in the worship of God. II. THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND HE SHALL BE THEIR GOD. 1. His people. There shall be a public and infallible acknowledgment of all who are His, by their admission into the tabernacle of God. 2. He will be their God. This implies, as in the case of the ancient Jewish Church, the engagement of all His perfections on their behalf. III. THEIR EXEMPTION FROM THE SUFFERINGS AND SORROWS OF MORTALITY. (*J. D. Carey.*) *Change and the unchangeable* :—"The tabernacle of God is with men." That is our great vision of victory, so glorious, so touching. These beautiful words never fail to stir. Let us think a little over the picture. "The tabernacle with men." First, it tells us that God's presence among men is now in a house, in an abode, in a home, so that we may know where He is to be found. He is no longer here upon earth merely as a flying cry in the wilderness, as an invisible wind that bloweth where it listeth. But God has done more than send out a cry to the world; He has made Himself a tabernacle, a chosen spot, selected, appointed, where He is always, for every one who will come there, in a permanent, secure place; He has taken up His abode, and He has set His name there in the midst of men, so that among their houses you may know God's house, and in the thick of their affairs you will see God's affairs going forward. Look at this vast Cathedral of ours, with its dome and golden cross lifted above, always to be seen, and within the hush of the silent spaces, and souls that are there being steeped in calm. There is just a little something here to show that God has made His tabernacle with men. And yet that is not all or half the picture conveyed to us by these words of St. John. The tabernacle it is, not the temple, we remember. The old word carries us back far beyond the Temple of Zion and the rock. It bids us think of the days of the pilgrimage, of the long-trailing masses moving across the desert sands, always moving, ever onward, drawn forward. In the morning the tent is struck: then there is the long, weary march, and, at the fall of night, the camp again. The changing scene, the unchanging home, that is the stamp and the brand that should be on the Church. First, the moving tent, the tabernacle, that follows as they move. Men are moving still, moving to-day fast, on and on, no rest and no pause, that long, unflagging pilgrimage still proceeding, multitudes and multitudes, and all in motion, quick, eager motion. And the tabernacle of the Church must move with them—"with men" it is to be. That is its first necessity. Wherever they go, beyond all these tumbling seas they have crossed, it must go, through all hazards, at their side, moving with this moving host, they must never miss it. There must be no scruples and dallies, and fears and anxieties, and suspicions and sloth, which keep the tabernacle behind on the march, lagging, belated, timid, shrinking, left behind in some old deserted camp through which they have gone. There it is to be; not somewhere else, but just there; touching all these novel adventures, welcoming all these new sights, tasting all this new experience, bearing all these new burdens, sharing all these new burdens, sharing all these new anxieties—"with men." Oh! it must go amid incessant change, and yet still the same tabernacle of our fathers, the same abode where God always can be found, the one gospel, the one pardon, the one benediction, and the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice. (*Canon Scott Holland.*) *God tabernacled with men* :—Here we have first the announcement of a fact, the fact that God has entered into associations of some kind with man, of an especial and intimate character, more intimate apparently than any which exists between Him and the other creatures of His hand. And secondly we have here an expression of wonder—"the tabernacle of God is with men." I. WHAT THE "TABERNACLE OF GOD" IMPLIES. Certainly when we transfer an expression like this from the associations of our finite life to the life of the Divine and illimitable Being we must do so with serious reservations. To the Arab of the desert his tent is his covering, his shelter, his home. When a tabernacle is said to be God's, something more must be meant which corresponds in some way with our human associations with the expression, but something also widely different. To the Omnipresent a tabernacle cannot be a covering, it cannot be a shelter to Him who fills all in all. The expression is of itself startling and paradoxical, and yet it does contain a truth which is not the less worth attention. Reflect, then, on the power which we men have of making our presence emphatic and felt. We know from experience how a

man may sit among his fellows, giving little or no token of intelligence and sympathy, watching what passes, hearing what is said, yet making no sign, no intimation even of recognition. And we know how possible is the very reverse of all this, how thought, and feeling, and resolve may flash forth in countenance and in speech, and may profoundly impress, win, subdue all who come within the limits of a striking human personality. This means that we have the power of accentuating our presence among our fellow-men at will. We do not cease to be present in our limited way when we do not thus accentuate it, when we find ourselves in company which throws us back upon our own thoughts as distinct from company which provokes an expression of what we are thinking and feeling. Still, we are made in God's image, and therefore it is not irreverent, making all due allowance for the interval which separates the finite from the infinite, to presume something analogous in Him. He is the Omnipresent. But He may surely, if He wills, emphasise His presence by connecting either its manifestations or its blessings with particular spots, or actions, or persons, or incidents, or edifices, or ordinances. He is the Almighty, and who shall say Him nay? For us His creatures the only reasonable question can be whether there are grounds for thinking that He has done so: and we do not forget the essential conditions of His illimitable being because we attribute to Him the exercise of a power which He has not denied to ourselves. "The tabernacle of God," then, is an expression which implies not that the presence of the Omnipotent can be limited, but that it can be for certain purposes determined or emphasised in a particular direction. What is the deepest desire in human nature? what is the secret of that unappeasable restlessness of the human heart which no created object can permanently allay? It is the implanted longing for God. "Like as a hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God"—not merely a desire to know God; knowledge of the unattainable may be only torture, not merely a desire to be purified for the sight of God, but a desire to be really united to Him, a hope that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us. When the soul which the Infinite Being has created for Himself finds itself one with Him, its deepest instinct is perfectly satisfied, and then, and then only, it is at peace. Now the realisation of this implanted hope of the soul of man was first shadowed out, and then it was provided for. God tabernacled among men first intermittently and distantly, and then by actual union with mankind in the incarnation, and lastly in the society which sprang from this union, the holy Church of Christ.

II. THE FIRST JEWISH TABERNACLE. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." This might have been said of the sacred tent of which we read so much in the books of Moses, and which was the centre of the worship of Israel until the building of the Temple. It is "the tabernacle of the congregation," as our version renders the original words; more accurately it is "the tabernacle of meeting." This solemn phrase implied not a house in which men would meet together to talk or to hear about God, but where God would meet with His people. God would hold His court in it or at it. There He would instruct His chosen servants; there He would meet His people. And the history of Israel abundantly illustrates what was practically meant. With the tabernacle was closely associated a cloud, or pillar of cloud, as the visible symbol of the Divine presence. From it proceeded the guidance, the warning, the judgment which might be needed for Israel. Nor was this cloud by any means the only association of the tabernacle with the sacred Presence. Within the tabernacle was the breastplate of the High Priest, the Urim and Thummim, through which the Divine will was communicated to devout inquirers; and in the holiest recess of the tabernacle was the sacred ark containing the two tables of the law, and covered by the mercy-seat, that symbol of the Divine compassion covering human transgressions of the eternal law; while above were the winged cherubim, representatives these of created life in its highest form, bending to adore the moral revelation of the Self-Existent which the contents of the ark enshrined. We cannot exaggerate the importance of the position of the two tables of the law. It marked off in the eyes of Israel, as sharply as was possible, God's revelation of Himself as righteousness, from the Egyptian and other Eastern conceptions of Him as some form of cosmic force or nature-power, whether productive or otherwise. And this was the central scene of the Presence vouchsafed in the tabernacle, which made it as the Psalmist calls it, "the tent which He had pitched among men." And above this ark was the Shekinah, Divine glory, the centre point of the adoration of primitive Israel. The Presence in the tabernacle was undoubtedly a localised presence, a particular determination of the presence of God, whose Being knows no bounds. But the tabernacle had

no necessary or inseparable relations to the Presence which it for a while enshrined. Its relation to the Presence was provisional. It did its work for the people of revelation, and then it passed away. III. A DEEPER MEANING. The sacred manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His body and His human soul, became by the incarnation the tabernacle of God. The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, very and eternal God, took man's nature upon Him in the womb of the Blessed Virgin of her substance; so that two whole and perfect natures were joined together in one person, never to be divided. The Son had existed from eternity; and then He wrapped around His eternal person, and indissolubly, a human body and a human soul. His human body and soul were the tabernacle in which He, the Eternal Word and Son, deigned to dwell, not for thirty-three years only, but for ever. And thus whilst men looked on a human form and heard human language, and noted the circumstances of a human life, and asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son? and is not His mother called Mary?" as if nothing in the world could possibly be plainer, He on the other hand could say without a trace of exaggeration, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; "The Son of Man which is in heaven"; "Before Abraham was (became) I am"; "I and the Father are one." It is this which makes the Gospels unlike any other books, even any other inspired books. They describe a life radically unlike any other life that ever was lived on earth. It is the life of the Divine Being making human nature His tabernacle, dwelling on earth in human form. True, the first three Gospels lay stress chiefly on the human form, and the fourth lays stress chiefly on the Divine nature which it veiled and yet manifested. But they all of them describe One who, living among men, was infinitely more than man, since His manhood was the tabernacle of God. IV. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." This is true in a somewhat different sense of the Church of Christ, in which Christ has dwelt throughout the Christian ages. He has kept, He is still keeping, His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." He has been with us for more than eighteen centuries. His Church is an outflow of His incarnate life. For this Church of His is an aggregate of Christian lives, and each living Christian is a product and an extension of the life of the Redeemer. "As He is, so are we in this world," "Christ in you the hope of glory." There is more in a Christian's life, as there was more in that of the Lord Jesus Christ, than meets the eye. The Christian's thought is supplied, enriched, controlled by a Book in which human words veil the mind of the Eternal. His intellect is illuminated, his affections are expanded, his will is invigorated, his whole nature is first renewed, and then sustained and developed by a force which Christendom calls grace, and which flows forth from the sinless manhood of the incarnate Christ at the bidding of His Spirit. Still, although Christ is thus with His Church, and she is the tabernacle which He has pitched in the wide field of humanity, she is composed of weak and sinful men, and so far she is out of correspondence with the perfect manhood in which His God-head tabernacled on earth, and in which He still dwells within her. The Bride of the Lamb is not yet prepared for the Bridegroom's welcome. The tabernacle of the Church in which Christ dwells on earth is soiled and torn. It could not be translated in its present condition to the courts above. He who dwells in it must prepare, must glorify, must embellish it. (*Canon Liddon.*) *God's tabernacle on earth* :—The voice that uttered these words is said to have been a "great" one, indicating their importance, and God's desire that we should listen to the announcement. We are not told who uttered it. It "came out of heaven"; this is all we know. It was the inhabitants of heaven looking down from the upper glory, and rejoicing in what had at length, after so many ages and so many hindrances, been accomplished upon earth. 1. THE DESIRABLENESS OF THIS STATE OF THINGS. Many things show us this. 1. The interest which the inhabitants of heaven take in it, as seen in the words before us. 2. The pains and costs which God has been at to bring about this issue. 3. The work of Christ, through which it has been brought about. 4. The desire with which prophets and righteous men have desired this issue. 5. The change which it will produce on earth. II. THE DECLARED PURPOSE OF GOD AS TO THIS GLORIOUS ISSUE—GOD HAVING HIS TABERNACLE WITH MEN. One of the earliest statements is an intimation of God's purpose respecting this. Paradise was meant not merely as man's abode, but as God's abode with man; so that when man sinned, God is represented as coming down to the garden in the cool of the day. Man's sin then frustrated, if we may so speak, God's purpose in the meantime, yet it did not hinder that purpose from being

made known. This great original purpose of God to have His dwelling with men continued to be presented to man in type and prophecy from that day forward, to show that it had only been postponed, not abandoned—postponed in order to be carried out more fully and more gloriously than it could have been before. Especially was this the case in Israel's history, from the time that the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness to the day when the temple and city were laid in ruins by the hand of the aliens. The statement in the Gospel of John regarding the Son of God is another declaration of this same purpose: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"; literally, tabernacled or pitched His tent among us. And, in our Lord's words, we have more than once the intimation of the same thing. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). And it is this which is the complete fulfilment of Christ's name Immanuel, "God with us." Nor have there been any intimations of God's design ultimately to abandon earth, after He has accomplished certain ends. On the contrary, all that He has said and done hitherto indicate His intention to restore it, to glorify it, and to fit it for being His abode. III. THE MEANS, OR PROCESS, BY WHICH GOD IS BRINGING ALL THIS ABOUT. 1. The first actual step was the incarnation. By taking a body made out of the substance of earth, He joined Himself in perpetual affinity with man and his world; and that which God has thus joined together, who shall put asunder? 2. His life on earth was the second step towards the end in view. His living here for thirty-three years was the declaration of His desire and purpose to make earth the seat of His tabernacle. But in this life we see more than this. We see Him taking possession of creation; we see Him doing battle with its oppressors: we see Him casting out Satan, healing diseases, overcoming death. He who did these things in the day of His humiliation and weakness, and before His great work upon the Cross was accomplished, will surely do exceeding abundantly more than all these, in the day of glory and power, now that He has finished His work, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 3. His death was the next step. He was earth's Sin-bearer as well as man's. He took upon Him the curse of earth as well as man; and the thorns which formed His crown showed how truly He was bearing the curse upon creation which Adam's sin had caused. As the bearer of man's guilt, He was nailed to the cross; as the bearer of earth's curse, He was crowned with thorns. Earth has now been sprinkled with His blood; and that blood cleanseth from all sin. 4. His burial was the next step. By death the Prince of life overcame death; and in His burial He was pursuing the routed foe, and compelling him to deliver up his prey. Thus did He commence the expulsion from death of that mortality and corruption which had defaced it so sadly. 5. His resurrection was the next step. Wrestling His own body from the dominion of death, He showed how ere long He is to wrest, not only the bodies of His saints, but the whole creation, from the bondage of corruption. Christ's resurrection not only proclaimed Him to be the Son of God with power, but also the Prince of the kings of the earth. 6. His ascension into heaven was the next step. When He ascended, He not only led captivity captive, but He carried up into heaven His own body as the representative of earth. That portion of earth which, in His body, He has carried up into heaven, proclaims to the inhabitants of heaven His interest in earth, and to the inhabitants of earth the certainty of His purpose respecting earth's final restitution. And for what is this ascended Saviour interceding? Not only for His Church, but for earth itself. "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for Thy possession." Nor shall these intercessions be long in vain. Soon shall they be all answered, and the cry be heard, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!" 1. Saint, are you making ready for that day? Are you walking worthy of an heir of that glory? Are you remembering that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? Are you at one with Father and with Son in your desire for that restitution of all things? 2. Sinner, what are your thoughts of that day? What hopes have you of sharing its blessedness? From that world all sin is swept away; and can you hope to dwell in it? Nothing that defileth shall enter; and do you expect to enter it? (H. Bonar, D.D.) *The descent of heaven to earth:—*I. THE SENTIMENTS OF WHICH THIS PROCLAMATION IS EXPRESSIVE. 1. The exultation of joyous discovery. 2. The rapture of sacred astonishment. 3. The eagerness of solemn expectation. 4. A benevolent interest in all that pertains to the welfare and destiny of man. 5. The satisfaction of devout intelligence, beholding in the events which it contemplates fresh attestations

of the stability and fulness of their own eternal welfare, as dependent on the Divine counsels and character. 6. Preparation for instant and cheerful concurrence in the effectuation of God's purposes, and the advancement of His glory.

II. THE EVENTS BY WHICH THIS PROCLAMATION IS CALLED FORTH. 1. It is impossible not to be directed, in the first place, to the wonders of providence, as exhibiting, in all their succession and variety, the immediacy of God's concern for human welfare, and the individuality, as well as constancy, of His regard. 2. But we turn to a still more elevated subject, and notice the sublimer wonders of redemption, as adapted pre-eminently to arouse the emotions and corroborate the sentiments which our text embodies. 3. We would briefly advert to the mysteries of sanctifying influence, as signalling the residence of the Spirit of God even in the hearts of His people. 4. The final revelations of the Divine power and greatness, both at the close of time, and through the ages of eternity. III. For the direct improvement of this inquiry, let us now examine THE MANNER WHEREIN IT TEACHES US TO REFLECT BOTH ON OUR PRIVILEGES AND OUR DUTY. 1. We should meditate upon this subject with mingled gratitude and wonder, as on a theme majestic even beyond our highest contemplation, and yet not too elevated for our hopes. 2. We should reflect on the subject before us with united watchfulness, diligence, and trust, by which alone we can practically realise the enjoyment of so great a blessing. 3. Let us connect our meditations, in relation to the truth thus certified, with a correspondent appreciation of every ordinance which confirms it, and every symbol whereby it is made known. 4. The consideration of this blessing should inspire us with sacred ambition and a generous ardour to diffuse both its knowledge and its participation among those who are yet destitute of its enjoyment. 5. Let us, finally, contemplate the declaration of the text with holy and unquenchable desire directed habitually towards that happy period, wherein it shall attain the perfect disclosure of its import and the perpetuity of its unlimited fulfilment. (*R. S. McAll, LL.D.*)

The tabernacle of God with men :—The Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled by the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. His body—tent-like—was set up in the manger. 1. The tabernacle in the desert was in the first instance the pledge of God's constant presence with His people. Christ said, "I am with you alway." But in the tabernacle of the Jews there was a special token of the Divine presence in the Shechinah. So the presence of Christ is at times made more manifest by the Holy Ghost. 2. The tabernacle was also a witness. It was a witness to God's faithfulness, love, and care. What a witness was the Incarnation. 3. The tabernacle was the appointed place and means for all intercourse with God. By Jesus we have communion with God. He is God brought near. 4. The tabernacle was for sacrifice. No sacrifice could be offered in any other place. The incarnate Christ is the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is our burnt offering—He is also the altar of incense, and it is only through Him that any of our offerings, praise, money, service, bodies, can rise acceptable to God. 5. This tabernacle, altar, sacrifice, incense are always at hand—"with men" we can obtain forgiveness at any moment. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The highest good :—I. THE HIGHEST COMPANIONSHIP. 1. Close. 2. Permanent. 3. Wonderful. 4. Transcendental. II. THE HIGHEST RELATIONSHIP. 1. Subjects of My kingdom. 2. Students in My school. 3. Children in My family. III. THE HIGHEST PROPRIETORSHIP. 1. No one can have higher possession. 2. No soul can be satisfied without this possession. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Heaven on earth :—The text tells you that the tabernacle of God can come down from heaven and be a dwelling-place to man. You are living in a world of sin, which is continually pressing upon you on every side with all its weight. Your souls made for higher things cannot breathe freely in it. Its elements are hostile to your well-being. And the only way in which you can protect yourselves effectually from the evil that is in the world is to bring down the air of heaven into it, and surround yourselves with its crystal purity. If you take that vital air with you wherever you go, it will be a wall of defence round about you, which will keep out all evil influences. There is no protection like this tabernacle of God within which you dwell, this element of godliness in which you live, and move, and have your being. And what blessedness do they enjoy who are hid in this tabernacle of God! Whatever may be the things that yield you most happiness here, nothing can give you solid satisfaction even in these, but the enjoying of them in the Lord, in union with Him whose blessing maketh truly rich and addeth no sorrow. Nothing can give such a zest to earthly joys and pursuits as the assurance that you are naturalised in the heavenly world. What wonderful properties does the air of heaven impart to the things of earth! We forget that our common earth is already among the

stars, is itself a star; that we are truly at present celestial inhabitants. Would that it were true of us that we are made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus here and now; that the spiritual world is over our natural world as the sky is over the earth, and influences everything in it! Would that we were not merely preparing for a future heaven, but living in heaven now! And in order to make the tabernacle of God to be indeed with men, you must each of you do your share. If God is your own tabernacle, and you show by your character and conduct that you are living a life of faith in Christ, you will help to make the whole world one tabernacle of God. The kingdom of heaven within you, will help to make a kingdom of heaven without you. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.**—*No tears in heaven:*—Tears are the symbol of sorrow. Tears are sometimes shed through excess of joy. Yet a tearful joy is ever akin to grief. I. **THE PRESENT STATE OF THE BELIEVER IS ONE OF TEARS.** 1. Because he is living in a world of sin. (1) While God is loved, the Saviour served, and His law honoured, the believer's heart has yet to mourn over the defectiveness of his service, and not infrequently over his lapses into sin. (2) Nor is his own sin alone the cause of his sorrow. He is no unaffected spectator of the unbelief and ungodliness and wickedness of his fellow-men. 2. Because he is in a world of suffering. Because of sin, suffering has an inlet through our whole nature, and is the chief burden of its history. It rises up like mist out of the landscape, to darken the whole scene of our present pilgrimage. (1) Think of the suffering that enters even the believer's dwelling when he experiences the stroke of adverse providence. (2) How often is the believer made to suffer from the stroke of relative bereavements! (3) How often has the believer to sorrow over personal infirmities and afflictions! 3. Because the world in which he lives is a world of death. As a curse, death is inseparable from sorrow. Even where unstinged, it tells of pain, of suffering, and tears. II. **THE FUTURE STATE OF THE BELIEVER IS ONE IN WHICH THERE SHALL BE NO TEARS.** 1. This removal of tears is directly traceable to God. It is enjoyed through grace in virtue of the Saviour's blood, and God bestows it through the pardon of the believer's sins, and by giving him a right and title to eternal life. 2. This removal of tears is complete. In the future world every source of sorrow shall have gone. 3. This removal of tears shall be for ever. Never shall heaven's sky be clouded nor heaven's bliss be interrupted by one single moment's experience of the vicissitudes of time. III. **THE REASON WHY THE FUTURE STATE OF THE BELIEVER SHALL BE A STATE FREE FROM TEARS.** 1. Because of the believer's personal presence with Christ. 2. Because it is a state of personal perfection. 3. Because it shall be a state of renewed union and communion with Christian friends for ever. 4. Because it is a state of unalloyed happiness. (*G. Jeffrey, D.D.*) *The tearless heaven:*—Amongst the troubles of this chequered earth our griefs are sometimes so sore that tears come as a relief. But this is not because tears are a good thing in themselves, but because an outward weeping is better than an inward lamentation. Tears have but one deep, primary source, and that source is sin. Beneath our gentlest virtues there sleeps the lava of an evil impulse ready to spring forth at any small ignition. When the penitent weeps over his sins, when the Christian weeps over his shortcomings, it is well; for they are the mourners in Zion to whose gloom a dawn is promised. "Blessed are they that thus mourn, for they shall be comforted." When the finger of the destroyer beckons us to look at our cherished ones lying in his embrace, it is not wrong to weep. Such tears must flow, for they are the signs of severed love. From whatever source the tears we shed may spring, they shall be wiped away in heaven. 1. They are sometimes caused by temporal depression. Such depression cannot extend beyond the bounds of time. In the abode where tears are wiped away there shall be no more poverty. "They shall hunger no more," &c. 2. Defective friendships are a prolific source of tears. Sometimes this defection is occasioned by infirmity, temper, ignorance, or prejudice. Many are our friends just so long as the sun of prosperity is shining; but as soon as our sky darkens into gloom, their smiles darken into frowns. Ay, and treacherous relationships, too, draw forth our tears. What bitter tears did David shed over the perfidy of his own son! And there's many a father now who knows something of the same grief. The flatterer of to-day is the reviler of to-morrow. The smile will often wreath into a sneer, and the eulogy change into a scoff. But there will be no faithless friends in heaven. No Judas shall be found sitting at the board. No tears shall fall over the treachery of lover, brother, friend. 3. How widely, more-

over, do the fingers of affliction fling open the sluices of our tears! These frames of ours are frail. "All flesh is grass." And it is an affecting sight to watch in those we love the gradual or quick transition from health to sickness, from activity to languor, and from strength to pain. But there is no infirmity, no mental or physical decay, to break in upon the immortal activity and youth of heaven. And what is the hand which shall thus wipe away our tears? It is a hand which once was pierced with nails; but there is no scar upon it now. The banishment of these tears is an act which is Divine. He sends no ministering angel round to soothe and comfort those He has redeemed; but He is His own missionary, and carries His own solace. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." 1. He will do it lovingly. As the "brother born for adversity," He will come gently on His assuaging errand; and as a high priest touched with a feeling of our infirmities, will He bid our mourning cease. 2. And He will do it effectually. He will not merely dry up a fountain that shall anon break forth afresh; but all tears shall be wiped away. Every cause of tears shall be removed; for He shall destroy sin, the great master evil—the wide, deep ocean from which all tears have been supplied. (*A. Mursell.*) *The utter removal of sorrow in heaven:*—I. We are to consider THE TEARS. 1. We will mention those which arise from secular affliction. 2. Those that arise from social losses. 3. Those that arise from bodily pains and infirmities. 4. Those which arise from moral imperfections—to a Christian the most painful of all. 5. Those which arise from the wickedness of others. II. Let us pass from the tears to consider THE REMOVAL OF THEM. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." 1. It is Divine. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." He alone can do it; He is the Father of mercies, the God of all grace, the God of all comfort. 2. The deliverance is future. It is not said, God does, but "God shall, wipe away all tears from your eyes." Earth will always be distinguished from heaven. You are now in the conflict; and it is a trying one. It is death that will proclaim the triumph, and say the warfare is accomplished. 3. The deliverance is complete. "God shall wipe away all tears." Nothing shall be seen but joy and gladness—nothing heard but thanksgiving and the voice of melody. 4. It is certain. Thy hope maketh not ashamed, because it is founded in the word of Him that cannot lie. III. THE USES WE ARE TO MAKE OF THIS DELIGHTFUL ASSURANCE. 1. Are you found in the number of the heirs of this promise? Will this be accomplished with regard to you? 2. The subject should remind us of our obligation to the Redeemer of sinners. 3. Does not this subject completely roll away the reproach of religion? 4. Christians, in the midst of your troubles, this subject ought to comfort you. You see that the last is the best, not only of some but of all your trials. (*W. Jay.*) *No more death.—What is death?*—I. DEATH IS "THE WAGES OF SIN." Men try to keep that fact out of view, and ascribe death to accident, disease, and second causes, without fathoming the depths to which they ought to descend. In Adam's transgression, that was wrapped up like the oak in the acorn. "The wages of sin is death." Man works for and wins that; and the Judge of all the earth uprightly pays it. II. OR, DEATH IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT—"It is appointed unto man once to die." It did not obtain a place in God's world without His permission or decree. No casualty, no blind chance precipitates man into the grave. It is not nature worn out, or so much animal machinery wasted away, it is the judicial appointment of the Holy One, protesting against all iniquity. III. OR, DEATH IS "THE KING OF TERRORS." It is often called "the debt of nature"; and that is one of the softening epithets by which men try to disguise from themselves the true character of death. But, in truth, nature abhors and recoils from such an allegation. Death comes because nature has been outraged, because the heart of man has revolted against his God; and the rebel must therefore encounter all that is terrific, since he supposed there was a more excellent way than living in amity and walking in love with his Maker. IV. OR, DEATH IS THE EXTINCTION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE—"In the day that thou eatest thou shalt die." Man then became dead to God, to holiness, to happiness, and heaven—he was dead in trespasses and sins. V. But mercy did interpose; and we therefore proceed to view death under another aspect—IT IS AN ABOLISHED THING; Christ has "abolished death." Strange message that, amid our crowded churchyards, where the dead far outnumber the living in the less crowded city! Yet not more strange than true—wherever the way appointed by the Lord of Life is followed, death is abolished, and the body and soul will both live for ever. VI. OR, DEATH IS A SLEEP. "Sleep in Jesus." VII. OR, DEATH MAY BE REGARDED AS THE SERVANT, AND THE VERY PROPERTY OF BELIEVERS: "All things are yours . . . whether life or

death." In such a case, death is the messenger sent to call the believer home, or to summon him into the presence of his Father. The grotto of Posilippo is a long dark passage through a mountain near Naples. While in that vault-like place, extending over some hundreds of yards, the wayfarer feels the dreariness and discomfort of the scene. But when he emerges to the west, the bay of Baiæ stretches at his feet, one of the richest and most balmy even of Italian scenes; or to the east—then he is greeted by the bay of Naples, with its unutterable outspread of beauty, of city, of mountains, ocean, and volcano, till the eye revels and luxuriates amid the profusion of loveliness. It is a type of the believer emerging from death. The new heavens and the new earth are spread out before him; and though there be "no more sea," the fulness of joy becomes his beatitude for ever. The curse is quenched—the sting is extracted; and misery, sorrow, fear—for all these things are portions of death—are over for ever. (*Christian Treasury.*)

Neither sorrow.—*The end of sorrow*:—How many tears now fall daily from weeping eyes. 1. How oft-times the Christian sheds the tears of penitence, as he feels the shadow of guilt fall across the memories of the past. But there the painful remembrance of his errors will be lost in the glad radiance of eternal absolution. 2. Here we sometimes cannot help the bitter tears of mortification rising to our eyes at our own failures in the Christian life. In a better world we shall see how God led us. He will wipe away the tears of regret and mortification, as we learn why it was that our lives were moulded and shaped in this or that fashion. 3. Often in this life the Christian sheds tears of indignation. Dean Swift, who, with all his faults, had an honest hatred of what was mean and unjust, had inscribed, by his own direction, on his tomb, that he hoped to rest, "where fierce indignation would no longer lacerate his heart." But the balmy air and the sunny slopes of the new paradise of God will never know anything of the sin, the injustice, and the cruelty, which, by their shadows, darken the heart even of the Christian here. (*W. Hardman, LL.D.*)

Neither . . . pain.—*No more pain*:—There is no need to explain to any human being what it is that is meant by pain. We know pain by the best means of knowing: we know it by having felt it. There is a sense in which we may use the word, in which its meaning is wider than it is as it stands in this text. Pain may be taken to mean everything that you would shrink from, from whatever source it may come—everything that implies suffering, sorrow, anguish. But it is not in this large sense that the word is to be understood in this text. For you observe that the writer of the Revelation distinguishes it from sorrow, from death, from tears. But pain means bodily suffering. Pain means that suffering which though felt in the soul has its origin in the body. And now you see that in the better world there is to be an end of it. "There shall be no more pain." In the better world above, then, pain shall be unknown. Many a poor sufferer, doubtless, will cherish a very soothing and cheering thought of heaven as the only place where there is "no more pain." Pain is in itself never a desirable thing. Great good may come through it, or of it; but the actual suffering in itself must always be a thing from which we would, if it were possible, shrink away. You know how pain, even when not very great, and even when not likely to be followed by serious consequences, destroys the enjoyment of life. A thousand blessings may be neutralised, so far as concerns their power of making us happy, by one little fretting pain. For pain is a thing that you cannot well forget while you are enduring it; it has a wonderful power of compelling attention to itself; you cannot long or heartily think of anything else while you are suffering acute pain. But pain does worse than mar the enjoyment of life; it unfits, as a general rule, for the work and duty of life. As a general rule you cannot do your work well when you are suffering pain even if not very great. It worries you; it draws off your attention from what you are about; you have no heart for your task. And there are worse possibilities about pain than even these. I do not forget that by God's blessed Spirit's working it has often been sanctified to work the soul great good; it has served to wean the affections from the things of time and sense. But this is the tendency of pain sanctified, it is not the natural tendency of pain. Do not you know that pain just as frequently makes the sufferer fretful and impatient, peevish and ill-tempered to those around; nay, ready to repine at the allotment and providence of God! But all this naturally leads us to ask, If pain be so bad a thing, and if it be so happy an assurance that the day is coming when there shall be no more of it, why is it here at all? 1. Pain teaches us, for one thing, how feeble and dependent we are. The proverb says that pride feels no pain: only let the pain be great enough and where will be the pride! 2. And for a second thing, pain is something to remind us of the evil

of sin. You never would have had a headache if it had not been for sin. You never would have known a sleepless night, a shooting pang through the nerves, or a dull weight at the heart, if it had not been for sin. Our natural tendency is to think to ourselves, oh, sin is not right—it cannot be justified, it is bad no doubt—but it is not such a very great matter after all. What does pain say to that, think you! 3. And another lesson taught us by pain is suggested by this, it is how terribly God can punish; what tremendous appliances of punishment He has at His command. What fearful suffering God does inflict even in this world! No man would have kept that poor sufferer in that suffering for one minute. But God keeps him there: keeps him day after day, week after week. Oh, we have an inflexible Judge to face, merciful though He be! So pain teaches something of the severity of God. But I turn gladly to another lesson, a far happier lesson, taught us by pain. 4. It reminds us how great was our blessed Saviour's love for our poor sinful souls, which made Him bear such an unutterable load of anguish as He bore for us. Such are certain lessons which we are taught by pain. But in the better world pain will not be needful to enforce them. They will be remembered there so far as it is fit that they should be remembered, without the necessity of having that sad monitor ever near. And thus, as in that happy country, pain would be of no use, pain will go. Oh the comfort of the thought! Christians who have suffered much in this being remember this, that in heaven there shall be "no more pain." The parting pang which the believer feels in leaving this world is the very last that he shall ever feel at all. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *No pain among the blessed:—*

I. WHAT ARE THE EVILS WHICH FLOW FROM PAIN, AND USUALLY ATTEND IT IN THIS LIFE? 1. Pain has a natural tendency to make the mind sorrowful as well as the body uneasy. 2. Another evil which attends on pain is this, that it so indisposes our nature as often to unfit us for the business and duties of the present state. 3. Pain unfits us for the enjoyment of life as well as for the labours and duties of it. 4. Another inconvenience and evil which belongs to pain is that it makes time and life itself appear tedious and tiresome, and adds a new burden to all other grievances. 5. Another evil that belongs to pain is that it has an unhappy tendency to ruffle the passions, and to render us fretful and peevish within ourselves, as well as towards those who are round about us. 6. Pain carries a temptation with it, sometimes to repine and murmur at the providence of God. 7. To add no more, pain and anguish of the flesh have sometimes prevailed so far as to distract the mind as well as destroy the body. Extreme smart of the flesh distresses feeble nature, and turns the whole frame of it upside down in wild confusion. It has actually worn out this animal frame, and stopped all the springs of vital motion. **II. WHAT JUST AND CONVINCING ARGUMENTS OR PROOFS CAN BE GIVEN THAT THERE ARE NO PAINS NOR UNEASY SENSATIONS TO BE FELT BY THE SAINTS IN A FUTURE STATE, NOR TO BE FEARED AFTER THIS LIFE?** 1. God has assured us in His Word that there is no pain for holy souls to endure in the world to come. 2. God has not provided any medium to convey pain to holy souls after they have dropped this body of flesh. 3. There are no moral causes nor reasons why there should be anything of pain provided for the heavenly state. **III. WHAT ARE THE CHIEF MORAL REASONS OR DESIGNS OF THE BLESSED GOD IN SENDING PAIN ON HIS CREATURES HERE BELOW, AND AT THE SAME TIME SHOW THAT THESE DESIGNS AND PURPOSES OF GOD ARE FINISHED.** 1. Pain is sometimes sent into our natures to awaken slothful and drowsy Christians out of their spiritual slumbers, or to rouse stupid sinners from a state of spiritual death. 2. To punish men for their faults and follies, and to guard them against new temptations. 3. To exercise and try the virtues and the graces of His people. **IV. INQUIRE WHAT ARE THOSE SPIRITUAL LESSONS OF INSTRUCTION WHICH MAY BE LEARNED ON EARTH FROM THE PAINS WE HAVE SUFFERED OR MAY SUFFER IN THE FLESH.** 1. Pain teaches us feelingly what feeble creatures we are, and how entirely dependent on God for every moment of ease. 2. The great evil that is contained in the nature of sin, because it is the occasion of such intense pain and misery to human nature. 3. How dreadfully the great God can punish sin and sinners when He pleases in this world or in others. 4. When we feel acute pains we may learn something of the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, even the Son of God, that glorious Being who took upon Him flesh and blood for our sakes, that He might be capable of pain and death, though He had never sinned. 5. The value and worth of the Word of God, and the sweetness of a promise which can give the kindest relief to a painful hour, and soothe the anguish of nature. 6. The excellency and use of the mercy-seat in heaven, and the admirable privilege of prayer. **Lessons:** 1. The frequent returns of pain may put us in mind to offer to God His due sacrifices of praise for the years of ease which

we have enjoyed. 2. To sympathise with those who suffer. 3. Since our natures are subject to pain it should teach us watchfulness against every sin, lest we double our own distresses by the mixture of guilt with them. 4. Pain in the flesh may sometimes be sent to teach us to wean ourselves by degrees from this body which we love too well; this body which has all the springs of pain in it. 5. We are taught to breathe after the blessedness of the heavenly state wherein there shall be no pain. (T. Hannam.) *The painless world*:—I. Pain is not needed there to STIMULATE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. Supreme love for the Creator will give men such a delightful interest in all His works as will make inquiry the highest delight of their nature. II. Pain is not needed there to TEST THE REALITY OF MORAL PRINCIPLE. The character will be perfected—the gold purified from all alloy. III. Pain is not needed there to PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER. We shall be like Christ, changed into His image, from glory to glory. IV. Pain is not needed there to AID US IN APPRECIATING THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. V. Pain is not needed there to IMPRESS US WITH THE ENORMITY OF SIN. (D. Thomas, D.D.) *Pain: its mystery and meaning*:—Suffering is the most stupendous fact in human experience; it is the most difficult problem in our religion. Alas! it is not necessary to prove its existence. We see it everywhere. It is a blessed thing that amidst such surroundings sensitive persons, who feel the thrusts of life keenly, and acutely sympathise with pain in its manifold forms, as experienced by others, can by means of the imagination be cheered with a foreglance of a better state of things when the former things shall have passed away. The Apostle Paul, a man of massive and logical intellect, the greatest Jew that ever lived, was a glorious dreamer who found comfort and courage in the bright prospect of the far-off future. The first point of view in which pain presents itself is that of a mystery. Let us hear what metaphysicians have to say respecting it. Plato tells us that pain is the root, the condition, the antecedent of pleasure, and the latter is only a restoration of the feeling subject from a state contrary to nature to a state conformable with nature. The Kantian philosophy maintains that pleasure is the feeling of the furtherance, pain of the hindrance of life. "Pleasure," says Hamilton, "is a reflex of the spontaneous and unimpeded exertion of a power, of whose energy we are conscious. Pain, a reflex of the overstrained or repressed exertion of such a power." "Pain," affirms Calderwood, "is not merely a negation or want of pleasure, but a positive experience opposite in kind." "By pleasure and pain I must be understood to mean whatsoever delight or uneasiness is felt by us, whether arising from any grateful or unacceptable sensation or reflection," is the opinion expressed by John Locke. After reading all that philosophers have written on the subject, mankind will still regard it as an unmitigated evil, nor will they be on the way to unravel the mystery. It may be said that this is a world of probation, and that pain is penal or disciplinary. Such is often the case, but it is not always so. Walk through the lengthy wards of a children's hospital. There is no discipline there. Poor children! they are too young to be its fitting subjects. Take man as we find him—African or Englishman, Greek or Roman—and study what you see. The poor beggar that sweeps the crossing, and that holds out his hat to you for a copper, is a child of God as much as you; the only difference being that perhaps you know it and try to act like a child, while he has forgotten it altogether. Every-day life experiences are illustrative of the Pauline expression, "The whole creation groaneth," &c. Does Almighty God find His pleasure in the most degraded form of sensualism, in witnessing the torments of His creatures? Were such a conclusion possible, I could not ask you to render homage to Him, because He is the sweetest, gentlest, noblest of beings. I should become the victim of despair. But let me crush the spirit of blasphemy, and clear up this dark mystery by consulting the oracles of God. Therein I learn that man is the author of all the misery he endures. God made man free, the arbiter of his destiny; but when put to the proof he failed, yielded to temptation, and chose evil for his good. Man being the creature of sin, disease, and pain, his posterity, from the hour of birth, must have inherent in their nature the elements of multiform suffering. Here you see that sin is not necessarily the penalty, but the consequence, always of previous transgression. Moreover, you will observe that each generation, by its own irregularities, will entail upon its successor minds more debased, and bodies more accessible to disease. Here you have an explanation of the mystery of pain. From our own experience we can reason that pain in its manifold shapes works for our good. Tell me the painful feeling in you, and I will explain to you its mode of operation. Have you a want unsatisfied, are you weary of your pleasures, are you discontented with your circumstances?

In this feeling there is a strong impulse to action. Are you depressed by a sense of deficiency or of transgression? Therein you have an impulse towards virtue, towards improvement. Do you sigh for friendship, or feel the sting of unrequited love? Therein you are urged to live out of self, and to be kind, generous, and pitiful to the many hearts that bleed in this cold and selfish world. Are you sick-bereaved? Has pain deadened your body to all sensuous pleasure? Or, surrounded by your kind, is your heart a desolation? Fortitude, faith, patience, trust in heaven, the hope of heaven—there are no other resources when the heart is broken and the body shattered by disease. To the eye of a sculptor in every block of stone there is a statue; but to make it visible to every eye it must be cut out of the block with mallet and chisel. But the stone does not see the end in view, it only feels the rough treatment which it querulously resents. It wishes to be left alone. It is quite satisfied with itself as it is. "How long must I suffer?" asks the stone sorrowfully. "Only till all that is unsuitable and improper shall be removed," rejoins the chisel; "and when made meet for the high situation you are to occupy, you will be placed amongst the others, and be as beautiful as they are." Pain is oftentimes the result of disobedience to physical laws; not seldom is it hereditary, the diseased body and corrupt affections being transmitted by parents to their offspring; but in many instances it is not traceable to either of these causes. A being may be sinless and still a sufferer; a sufferer, not because his heart is base, but because his soul is noble. If we be pitiful, tender, and sympathetic, we cannot escape suffering. Such suffering develops character; and by it we become partakers of God's holiness—of His exquisite compassion and sensibility. Do not, therefore, suppose that simply because you suffer you are set apart of God and made an example. You are under the law which Christ lived under, which all human families live under. Those who have never suffered know only the surface of life. As one must strike flint to call forth sparks of fire, so must we strike the heart to make it capable of great and noble deeds. Austerity and mortification moulded the saints of old. They met misfortune with a smile, and scorned the fear of death even when the fire was at the stake, and the flames rose around their heads, because they knew that out of their very ashes God would call them to an immortality of happiness. This is the true effect of sorrow: it detaches us from the earth, lifts us up to heaven, and unites us to God. (*J. E. Foster, M.A.*)

Pain:—I. THE EXISTENCE, AND EVEN THE DOMINANCE OF PAIN. I do not think that we get to the deepest root of this tree of mystery by the common assertion that it was the sin of man from which all death and pain sprang. It is a significant fact that the higher the nature the more sensitive it is to pain. **II. IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO DISCOVER SOME OF THE PURPOSES OF PAIN,** whose prevalence in this world is so widespread. 1. Take one of the lower signs of human progress by way of example. Think of the increase in knowledge and skill which has followed on the sufferings of the race. 2. Think next of the connection existing between sufferers and sympathy. May it not be a part of God's purpose in permitting pain that it links us together in the bonds of love? 3. Nor must we overlook the effect of pain and sorrow on moral character and on religious faith. Wrongly received, they provoke to sin; rightly received, they lead us to self-conquest, to patience, to sympathy for others, and to fellowship with Christ. (*A. Rowland.*)

Pain ended:—"Neither shall there be any more pain." This is the inscription on the tomb of Robert Hall in Bristol cemetery. He would often roll on the carpet in agony, we are told, with the pain in his back. (*Thos. Cooper.*)

Chronic suffering:—Pascal, the great mathematician and moralist, said, "From the day that I was eighteen I do not know that I have ever passed a single day without pain. (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*)

F. W. Robertson's sufferings:—Torturing pains in the back of his head and neck, as if an eagle were rending there with its talons, made life dreadful to him. During Monday, Tuesday, and the greater part of Wednesday in every week he suffered severely. Alone in his room he lay on the rug, his head resting on the bar of a chair, clenching his teeth to prevent the groans which, even through the sleepless length of solitary nights, the ravaging pain could never draw from his manliness. (*S. A. Brooke, M.A.*)

For the former things are passed away.—The transient making room for the permanent:—As a mere statement of a fact obvious to one who reviews any period of a history from a point subsequently reached, this of course is comparatively commonplace. The former things are always passing away as one advances in knowledge and character and power. It is so with the individual. No man or woman has reached the period of maturity without having left behind many things which belong to the earlier periods of life. And what is true of the

individual is true as well of the community; true of a city. So it is with the world itself. All former things are continually passing away. The early cannibalism, the early human sacrifices; war undertaken simply in an impulse of rapacity and carried on in a spirit of ferocious cruelty; tyrannies, kingly and feudal; slaveries which were so universal in the past—they have gone into history. Society, in the world at large, has thus been radically changed, and while perhaps not complete, certainly the life is better; it has more liberal institutions, juster legislation, wider possibilities, a trust in God more quickening, more instructive literature, more lovely and laudable arts than it had in the earlier time. Former things from it have passed away, the chains have dropped from the limbs of the emancipated slave as the darkness passes from the vision under the hand of the skilful surgeon who removes the cataract from the eye. Many things are lost which we would like to keep in this process of development, and which we would like to blend with the knowledge and power of our maturer years—the simplicity of childhood, its capacity for learning, its confidence and admiration and wonder. In the city as it goes on in opulence and power we would like to retain, if it were possible, the early neighbourly feeling, early simplicity of manners. And the world at large loses something in losing its primitive fancies, which belong to the auroral period of human experience. And yet, upon the whole, it is vastly for the better, as we are constantly aware. The hope of humanity consists in this continual progress, where the former things are passing away and the new things are being attained and realised. It is the introduction of Christianity into such sluggish, stagnant and unaspiring empires as those of China or of Japan, as they were only a single century ago, which gives for them hope and promise as concerning the future. The former things are passing away. In the nature of the case they must pass away from the individual and from the race, as higher influences come to act upon it. So we should anticipate that when John, the prophet of the Apocalypse, looked forward into the final period of human history he would be struck with this fact that all the former things were passed away and He who is Lord of the earth hath made all things new. He would find his prophecy in part realised if he were to return again upon the earth and mingle in human society as it now exists. But yet these changes as they have already appeared, and as he would see them if he were to revisit the planet, are only prophetic of changes which are to be realised when the power by which these have been wrought has come to its complete consummation in history. And it is a beautiful thing in his prophecy that, looking forward to the very termination of history on earth, he sees the earth and the heavens closely assimilated, so that you cannot tell where the horizon of the earth ends and that of heaven begins. There are some points I will remark upon for your consideration. 1. One is that we here touch the characteristic difference between the Christian and any other form of religion known in the world. What is sadder in history than to see how the Greek mind, the Egyptian mind, the Persian mind, and the Roman mind had sunk into hopelessness of the future, at the time when the gospel of Christ was preached in the world. On the other hand, the gospel looks forward to glory to be realised in the centuries to come; sees for ever things passing away that better things may appear; sees the customs of society shivered and suddenly disappearing or gradually disintegrating, or falling into heaps of rubbish. So in all a new force is working in the world to lead men forward in communities to a higher level and nobler vision. It expects its ultimate victory in the glory of the future. 2. That is one thought, and another is of the superb confidence which the early Christianity felt in itself and which its teachers had in it. It is to conquer where philosophies have failed; it is to triumph where arts have only degraded the world; it is to purify where the human race has been sinking deeper and deeper in the mire of sin. Now, cannot we enter into the sublime confidence of the apostles, with Christianity enthroned already over the larger half of the world? I am ashamed of myself; I am ashamed of any Christian individual or Church where there is the least fear or apprehension concerning the progress and the mastery of this religion, whose earliest disciples knew its power, because they had seen the Lord; had stood around His Cross; had looked into the gate of the sepulchre from which He had come forth. 3. Another thought is suggested—namely, this: I have said already that we are sorry to lose many things which we, after all, have to leave behind us as we go on in our life personally or as communities, but when sin is expelled there is no longer any reason why that which has been lovely in the earlier life of any person should not continue, and only come to its more perfect manifestation in the completed maturity. What is it that corrodes and destroys the simplicity of childhood? What is it that destroys

that early and tender confidence in others which is the beauty of our unfolding life? What is it that makes us desirous in future life of the consciousness of power out of which comes pride? Of the consciousness of position out of which we are aware that we have lost the pure sincerity and sweetness of our childhood's years? Everywhere it is the element of sin. When at last that completed state is realised from which sin itself is eliminated, all the innocence of childhood with all the wisdom of age shall be charmingly combined; all the sweetness of early fancy with all the power of developed faculty; and then, in addition to this, that which has been imperfect and ignorant in the first will become an occasion of gladness and praise because we have been delivered from it. 4. Finally, the perfection of that state is the warrant of its fixedness and finality; that which is perfect is susceptible of no further change; you cannot re-make the sunshine, because it is perfect, the same to-day as when it fell on the bowers and blooms of paradise; you cannot re-make the atmosphere, because it is perfect, the same as when the lungs first inhaled it on the earth; you cannot re-make the element of water, or the blue of the sky, or the green of the verdure, or the sunset splendours. When this final stage is reached for which the Lord died, on account of which He underwent His sacrifice, which the apostle saw in prophetic vision, of which we beforehand may catch the beauty through his eyes, and for which it is the privilege in life of each of us to work and pray; when that final period comes where earth and heaven blend and holiness and wisdom bring perfect peace, the absolute completion of it, with sin expelled and grief left behind, is the Divine warrant that it shall be everlasting. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *The coming of the perfect, and the departure of the imperfect*:—I. THE FORMER THINGS CONNECTED WITH THE BODY HAVE PASSED AWAY. Our bodies shared the ruin into which sin brought our race. Mortality and corruption took possession of them. They became subject to pain, and weariness, and disease, in every organ and limb. All this shall yet be reversed. Former things shall pass away. This head shall ache no more; these hands and feet shall be weary no more; this flesh shall throb with anguish no more. II. THE FORMER THINGS CONNECTED WITH THE SOUL HAVE PASSED AWAY. The beginning of this renovation was our "being begotten again unto a lively hope." This re-begetting displaced the old things and introduced the new. The sin, and the darkness, and the misery, and the unbelief, and the distance from God—all these shall come to a perpetual end. In their place shall come holiness, and love, and light, and joy, and everlasting nearness—unchanging and unending fellowship with that Jehovah in whom is life eternal. III. THE FORMER THINGS CONNECTED WITH THE EARTH HAVE PASSED AWAY. This earth is the seat of evil since man fell. The curse came down on it; creation was subjected to the bondage of corruption; Satan took possession of it. The devouring lion shall be in chains, and "no lion shall be there." The curse shall vanish from creation; the blight disappear. Beauty shall clothe all things. Paradise shall return. Holiness shall revisit earth. God shall once more delight in it and set His throne in it. Righteousness shall flourish, and holiness to the Lord be inscribed everywhere. And all this irreversible! No second fall. Messiah—even He who died for us and who rose again—is on the throne, and no usurper can assail it. He ever lives and ever reigns. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-8. He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.—*One matchless Creator*:—Who is He that brings into existence on our planet a new order of spiritual things, that creates a new moral heavens and earth? I. HE IS IMMUTABLY TRUTHFUL. What He has spoken not only has been done, but is being done, and must be done. II. HE IS EVERLASTING. III. HE IS INFINITELY BENEFICENT. He pours forth in all directions the refreshing and crystal streams. And all this freely, without any coercion, limitation, partiality, or pause; freely as He gives the beams of day and the waves of vital air. IV. HE IS SURPASSINGLY CONDESCENDING. Two things are here stated which suggest this amazing condescension: 1. This recognition of every individual who does his duty. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." That He should notice a man in the mighty aggregate may well impress us with His condescension, but that He should notice individual man, how much more! Here we have the universe won by self-conquest. Notice: (1) Self-conquest as the grand work of man. The soul should be ruled by sympathy with God, sympathy with His character, His operation, His plans. In these two things self-conquest consists, and such conquests require battling—resolute, brave, persistent, invincible battling. (2) Self-conquest as winning the universe. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." He gets the

whole of it, he penetrates its meaning, appropriates its truth, admires its beauties, drinks in its poetry, revels in its spirit, exults in its God, and says, "The Lord is my portion." He gets the whole of it to enjoy for ever. 2. The amazing condescension is seen in the affiliation of every individual man that does his duty. "And he shall be My son." He only is a son who has the true filial instinct, involving trust, love, obedience, acquiescence. The great mission of Christ into our world was to generate in humanity this true filial disposition, enabling them to address the Infinite as "our Father." V. HE IS ESSENTIALLY SIN-RESISTING. Sin is cowardice, sin is faithless, sin is abhorrent, sin is murderous, sin is lascivious, sin is deceptive and idolatrous. All these productions of sin are abhorrent to the Divine nature. "It is the abominable thing" which He hates, and He consigns sin to irretrievable destruction, for it is destined to have its part in "the lake which burneth with fire." (*Homilist.*) *Christ the Renovator: an anticipation:—* There are two words in the original which are necessarily translated alike—"new"—in our Testaments. Of these two adjectives, one signifies new in relation to time, the other new in relation to quality—the first temporal novelty, the second novelty intellectual or spiritual. The Apocalypse is full of the Divine novelty implied by the latter of these two words. Up above we see "a new heaven." Down below the long "becoming" of the evolution of history and nature is complete, the "one far-off divine event" is reached; we have "a new earth." Out of the city that was in idea perfectly holy and beautiful, but which was marred by sin, and whose battlements were never steeped with the sunrise of the day for which we wait—out of it, as it were, grew "the holy city, new Jerusalem." Christ is the One Renovator. "He that sitteth upon the throne saith, Behold, I make all things new." I. THE SOURCE OF THE NEW CREATION IS THE NEW HUMANITY, CHRIST THE SECOND ADAM. The Incarnation is the creation by God the Holy Ghost of a new member of the human family to be the head of "a people that shall be born." It was not merely the most consummate possible evolution of pre-existing moral and historical elements. The gardener sees a stem which his experience tells him is endowed with peculiar capacities. He enriches it by grafting into it a new scion, not of or from the tree, but from another which is of a higher and nobler kind. Nothing less than this is in the mystery of the Incarnation. This, I believe, was foretold by Jeremiah (Jer. xxxi. 22). II. THE RESULT OF THIS IS THE CREATION IN CHRIST AND BY CHRIST OF A NEW HUMANITY. I say, by Christ. Christianity has a history, but is not a history. Christianity has a book, but is not a book. An idea may be great, a history may be great, but a person is greater. Luther's work, or Napoleon's work, is now linked to Luther's and Napoleon's ideas or history, and to nothing else. We have the ideas and the history of Christ in the Gospels and Epistles, the most efficacious of all ideas, the most true and living of all history. But Christ's work continues linked to Christ's life. Christ is not merely the central figure of the Galilean idyll, or a form nailed to a crucifix, or a pathetic memory. Our relation to Him is not merely one of idea, or of recollection, or of literary sympathy. It is a present union of life with life. He does not say—"because My words shall be gathered up and written down with absolute truth, My religion shall live." He does say—"because I live, ye shall live also." This new creation by Christ begins in the depths of the human heart and life. One of the world's greatest writers has illustrated the difference between true and false schemes of virtue by the difference between the work of the statuary and that of nature. The statuary deals with his marble piecemeal; he is occupied with the curve of a finger-nail, or the position of a lock of hair, and while so occupied can do no more. But nature is at work with a simultaneous omnipresence in root and leaf and flower. Christ's renovation is unexhausted and inexhaustible. He says Himself, "Behold, I make all things new." III. We naturally—perhaps in these days uneasily—proceed to ask WHETHER THE WORDS OF THE TEXT ADMIT OF APPLICATION TO THE INTELLECTUAL AS WELL AS SOCIAL PROGRESS OF CHRISTENDOM. Those of us who have seriously tried to reconcile that in us which thinks with that which feels and prays may entertain some misgiving. As we look back to the point from which we started many years ago we recognise the fact that, slowly it may be, but surely, we have advanced from our old position. 1. As we turn to nature, all of us at least who are over fifty will remember our youthful view of Genesis, with its rash anathemas and unhesitating dogmatism, with its crude schemes of premature conciliation. All things were flashed out of nothing, moment by moment, in six consecutive days of twenty-four hours. Reflection and knowledge have convinced us that the anticipation of exact science was not one of the purposes of the Bible.

But there is a higher life than that of which science knows. There is a light in which it lives. The light for that life which is beyond science comes to us through the revelation of Moses. What, then, do we learn from the first pages of the Bible? We say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," not less truly than of old, but with a deeper and larger meaning. Christ says to us even as we repeat the beginning of our creed, "Behold, I make all things new." 2. As we turn to Scripture we meet with a similar renovation of our earlier view. Consider, for instance, the question of the origin of the Gospels. It may be looked upon as ascertained that the Gospels were all written within the first century, none earlier than about A.D. 60, none much later than about A.D. 80. This historical fact in itself seems strange to certain primary notions from which most of us started. Yet a little reflection dissipates our uneasiness. In the bridal days which succeeded Pentecost the young Church was filled with a heavenly enthusiasm. At first, then, there was not—and there needed not to be—any official memorial of the life of Jesus. The apostle's sermons were sometimes, perhaps generally, summaries of the characteristics of that life. In portions of the apostolic epistles particular incidents are touched upon briefly—*e.g.*, the birth, the circumcision, the transfiguration, His poverty, the fact that He came of the tribe of Judah, His going without the camp bearing His Cross, the "Abba, Father," the "strong crying and tears" of Gethsemane. It seems to be certain that an unwritten life of Jesus, graven upon the living heart of the Church, preceded the written life. In this, indeed, there is no derogation from the real glory of the written word. No ark of the new covenant, overlaid round about with gold, kept in its side the book of the new law. Yet the Holy Spirit—without a separate miracle working in each syllable and letter—freely used the memory and intelligence of apostles and their disciples, that Christ's people in all ages might know the certainty of those things wherein they had been instructed; and that across the gulf of ages, through the mists of history, our eyes might see the authentic lineaments of the King in His beauty. Further, in the three first evangelists there is a certain common basis of similar, or identical, sentences and words. Critics may show that Matthew copied from Luke, or Luke from Matthew; may discuss whether Matthew is the "primitive" of Mark, or Mark of Matthew. Even without taking into account the promise of the Spirit to "bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them," such words from such a teacher could never perish from the earth. Thus, any change which criticism may make in our view of the origin and character of the Gospels tends to elevate our conception of their subject. We see in them a Saviour more exalted, if that were possible. We hear words yet deeper and more tender. Here, too, Christ saith, "Behold, I make all things new." 3. As we contemplate the process of religious thought, we may be sometimes tempted to fear that a period is approaching when religion will be so spiritualised as to dissolve away. The answer is afforded by simply considering the abiding, irreducible elements in man's nature—his intellect, his conscience, his affections. (*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*) *Christ the true Reformer*:—The Church of Christ has been from its foundation a society for the promotion of the reform of mankind. You may not, perhaps, be willing to recognise this at first, for two reasons. First, so much has been accomplished. Remember the state of things in the world before Christ came. A world in which men and women were bound down in cruel bondage, in which there were no hospitals for the sick. How completely Christianity has changed the whole course of life. But there is another reason why you may find it very hard to identify the Christian religion with reform. It is because the reform which the Christian religion works is based on the life, the teaching, and the death of one man, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. (1) How true a reformer Jesus was in His life. He shared the fate of all reformers—"He was despised and rejected of men," &c. Like Socrates, like Savonarola, Latimer, and John Huss; like many another in Church and State, He was killed by the people. Your true Reformer is no demagogue; he does not flatter the people: he tells them the truth. (2) Notice Christ's aims and His methods. His aim was not that of most reformers. He did not seek in the first place to make men happy, but to make them holy. As to His methods. In the first place, Christ began from the centre and worked towards the circumference. He did not come into the world with any elaborate scheme for the regeneration of society: He had no scheme for making men wake up some fine morning and find themselves all happy and good. Our Lord took people as He met them, singly, and got hold of their wills, and changed and converted them. This is the reform which alone

can make other reforms beneficial. (2) A second part of Christ's method was that the reform was thorough and complete, extending to the body, soul, and spirit. (3) The methods of reform adopted by Jesus Christ were gradual. He Himself compares His influence to the leaven, &c. So it has ever been with the influence and teaching of Christ. (4) The stimulus or motive which Christ used is something very different from what many reformers have used, Fear, self-interest, jealousy have, alas! often been prominent motives. With Christ you have two motives put forward—"The love of God and the love of man." (*C. L. Ivens, M.A.*) *All things new*:—I. THE DIVINE METHOD OF EFFECTING THE GREAT CHANGE. 1. It is spiritual. The evils which exist here are either the direct fruits of sin, or the necessary means of moral discipline for its removal. A remedy for them must be found, not in miraculous interference with the established order of nature, but in the gospel of salvation. 2. The gospel begins by regenerating man himself. The Spirit of God touches his heart, quickens his intellectual nature, kindles the imagination, develops the reasoning faculties, and imparts a desire for knowledge. 3. Herein is found the principle which is to regenerate society, which is to be the basis of a true civilisation. Even the science, so called, which scoffs at both God and revelation, owes to Christian schools its culture, to a Bible-taught people the ability to understand and use it, and to the generous protection of Christian laws the liberty to assert itself in defiance of the most sacred convictions of mankind with impunity. 4. Other millennial blessings are the abolition of the great social evils which have hitherto cursed the world—war, and slavery, and intemperance, and lust. The only effective way to reach these and similar evils is to make men themselves better. 5. But it is not alone the moral and social renovation of the world that is to be effected; it is the physical as well. The same power that makes man's heart new will ultimately make his body new, and so abolish disease and premature death. II. THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN MADE IN THE PAST TOWARDS THIS PROMISED RESULT. It was a hard soil in which Christianity, the Divine mustard-seed, was dropped eighteen hundred years ago. What was the reception He met with? Not frigid indifference, but violent opposition. At last the world was startled to hear that even Cæsar himself had bowed at the feet of the Nazarene, and, by imperial decree, placed the hated religion on the throne of the empire. II. WHAT IS YET TO BE DONE, AND WHAT IS THE PROSPECT AS TO ITS COMPLETION? 1. The whole world is to become known and accessible to Christian nations. 2. Christianity is soon to become the sole religion of mankind. All others are on the wane. 3. Christianity is rapidly increasing in power. 4. Christianity, as never before, is inspiring the powers of the world, and directing them to the improvement of mankind. Science, art, commerce, wealth, are her handmaids. She is using them all to make the world better, and man happier. 5. Only one thing is wanting more, and that is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and the nations. 6. The grand hope and expectation of the Church as to the future becomes thus more than an object of faith. (*J. P. Warren, D.D.*) *The renewal of all things*:—I. THE NEED OF A COMPLETE MORAL RENEWAL. All visions of a political or economic millennium wreck themselves upon the obstinate fact of human depravity. With this, legislators, philosophers, and moralists have been found powerless to deal. II. AN ADEQUATE POWER. "He that sitteth on the throne." He who created the human soul can renew it. Omnipotence rises up to work. III. THE WONDER OF REGENERATION. IV. THE SECRET OF "HOLDING OUT." V. THE GREAT NEED OF THE CHURCH—a regenerate membership. VI. THE ULTIMATE RENEWAL OF ALL OUTWARD THINGS—nations, nature. (*Jas. C. Fernald.*) *The new things of God*:—There are many new things spoken of in Scripture, some of more and some of less importance. Take the following as specially the new things of God: I. THE NEW TESTAMENT OR COVENANT (Matt. xxvi. 28). That which was old has vanished away. It was insufficient; it could not help the sinner; it said nothing of forgiveness. But the new covenant is all a sinner needs: it comes at once with a free pardon; it presents a work done for the sinner, not a work for the sinner to do. II. THE NEW MAN (Eph. iv. 24). This seems to correspond with the "new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17); with the "new heart" (Ezek. xviii. 31); with the "new spirit" (Ezek. xi. 19); with the "heart of flesh" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26); with the "new birth" (John iii. 3); and the being "begotten again" (1 Pet. i. 3). Newness of nature, of heart, of life, of words, of the entire being, is the basis of all religion and true worship. III. THE NEW WAY (Heb. x. 19). All God's dealings with the sinner are on a new footing, that of free love, simple grace. It is a free way, a sufficient way, an open way, a perfect way. IV. THE NEW SONG (Psa. xxiii. 3;

Rev. v. 9). Every new day brings with it a new song; or rather it brings materials for many new songs, which we should be always singing. Our whole life should be full of new songs. Yet the old songs are not thereby made obsolete; they do not grow tame or unmeaning. As the old songs of a land are always fresh and sweet, so is it with the old songs of faith. These new songs have to do with the past—for often, in looking into the past, we get materials for a new song—with the present, and with the future. They are connected with ourselves, our families, with the Church, with our nation, with the work of God just now, with resurrection, with the restitution of all things, with the glory, the New Jerusalem, and the new creation. V. THE NEW COMMANDMENT (John xiii. 34; 1 John ii. 8). VI. THE NEW WINE (Matt. xxvi. 29). He is Himself the giver and the gift. His blood is drink indeed here; much more hereafter. It is "new" here; it will be much more new hereafter. VII. THE NEW JERUSALEM (Rev. iii. 12, xxi. 3, 10). This is no earthly city. VIII. THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH (Isa. lxi. 17; 2 Pet. iii. 13). IX. THE NEW NAME (Rev. ii. 17). 1. Of love. The Father's love will be in it. 2. Of honour. It will be no mean nor common name, but glorious and celestial. 3. Of blessing. It will proclaim blessing; it will be a name of blessing. 4. Of wonder. It will astonish the possessor, and every one who hears it; no one shall know it or guess it. 5. Given by Christ. "I will give." As He gave names to Abram, Jacob, Peter, John, so will He give this new name, superseding our old earthly appellation. 6. Most suitable and characteristic. It will in itself summarise our past history and character. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Making all things new* :—The love of new things is natural to man, but the love of old things is equally natural. How to reconcile these two instincts without doing wrong to either is a perpetual problem. The love of what is new takes three principal forms. First there are those who are always looking for something new. This is its lowest form. It is a perpetual demand for novelty, for new things simply as new. In such a mind thought is disorganised, and becomes a heap of sand. Interest in life fades away, for the heart is anchored to nothing. The soul drifts before every wind of accident. The power of attention is lost: many things are taken in, nothing retained. Secondly, there are those who are always contending for new things. The danger here is in narrowness and bigotry, for a man may be as bigoted to a new creed as to an old one, and as ready to persecute the conservatives as they are to persecute him. Nevertheless, by the help of this class the world moves forward. Thirdly, there are those who make all things new. And this is the highest and best style of reform, for it reforms the world by putting new life into it. Every spring God says, "Behold I make all things new." The old types remain unchanged, the forms of the familiar landscape continue the same, the grass grows green in the valleys, the trees cover themselves with leaves, exactly as they have done ten thousand times. It is not novelty but renewal. And so the best things which can come to our lives are not novelties, but new inspirations of the one eternal life. Life, in all its forms, makes all things new, and makes the world new. Events which have happened a million times before are nevertheless always new with each recurrence. What can be older than birth, childhood, love, marriage, death? But what can be more new, more full of fresh influence, bringing a sudden influx of joy and mystery, awakening the soul to a new life, than these? A new truth makes all things new. I have often talked with men who were brought up on some dead creed, who were taught to go through certain forms of worship and call it religion. These doctrines had hardened their hearts, deadened their spiritual nature, and driven them from God into doubt and unbelief; for, as love casts out fear, so does fear in turn cast out love. Then they were led by some good Providence to see God in a new light—a being without caprice or self-will, with steadfast laws, always working for the ultimate good of all His creatures, wisely giving, wisely withholding, not willing that any should perish. This benign truth opened their soul, made all nature new, all life new, made a new heaven and a new earth, took away anxiety and fear, and filled their days with bright hope and joy in all work. So, too, a new love makes all things new. Do you remember the beautiful story of Silas Marner—how a man with no friendships, no affections, living alone in a solitary hut, devoting himself to saving a hoard of gold, was robbed of his money? And then, when he came back to his hut in despair, he found a little abandoned child who had crept into his house and gone to sleep on the hearth, and how this little child stirred the hidden fountains of life in the miser's heart, so that he devoted himself to the infant, and all the world became by degrees to him another world, old fears expelled and new hopes

created by the power of this new affection? In this way Christ makes all things new, and "if any man be in Christ he is a new creation." Christ gives us a new heart and a new spirit, not by any miraculous or supernatural power, but by the power of the new truth which He shows to us, and the new love with which He inspires us. We want no better world than this, no better opportunities than we have here. But we need a new spirit of faith and love, in order that God's kingdom shall come, and His will be done in this world, making this a heaven. This heaven must begin in our own hearts, or it will be no heaven to us. I was told by a friend that, when at the Centennial Exhibition, he was accosted by a family who were walking about the grounds, who asked him how much it would cost them to go into all the buildings. "Why," said he, "it will cost you nothing. You paid at the gate when you entered the grounds the whole price." So I see persons who go to church year after year, and yet stand outside of Christianity, not enjoying the love of God. They stand outside of all these Divine comforts and hopes, and do not take hold of them, because they think they have no right to do so. To them I say, Go in at once, and take all you need. When God led you through the gate into Christianity the price was paid. You will not probably, it is true, become great saints at once. But you can begin now to receive God's help, God's power, God's inspiration, and the hope of the gospel. Nothing is necessary but to go in. Thus God makes a new heaven and a new earth, wherever the truth and love of Jesus go. The new heavens first; the new earth afterwards. First, the inward convictions; then the outward life. First the seed, then the plant; the fruit last of all. (*Jas. Freeman Clarke.*) *The new self* (with Ezek. xxxvi. 26; 2 Cor. v. 17):—I. Human hearts unappeasably cry out after change. Something new we all need; and because we need, we crave for it; and what we crave after, we hope for. The old we have tried, and it is not enough. We are still not right; we are not full; we are not at rest. In the future there may be what we need, and so long as there is a future, there is hope; but the past is dead. Now, the best lesson which the years can teach is, perhaps, this one: that the new thing we need is, not a new world, but a new self. Not change in any outward surroundings of our lives; not an easier income, not a cheerfuller home, not stronger health, not a higher post, not relief from any thorn in our flesh against which we pray; but a change within—another self. We have done evil, and the evil which we have done cleaves to us. We are the children of our own deeds. Conduct has created character; acts have grown to habits; the lives we have led have left us such men as we are to-day. And forward into the "new year" we must go, unaltered with this old, evil, dissatisfied self confirmed and stiffened and burdened only the more as the past behind us grows longer and longer. II. At this point the gospel meets us. It is the singular pretension of the Christian gospel that it does make men new. It professes to alter character, not as all other religious and ethical systems in the world have done, by mere influence of reason or of motives, or by a discipline of the flesh; it professes to alter human character by altering human nature. It brings truth, indeed, to satisfy the reason and powerful motives of every sort to tell upon the will, as well as law to stimulate the conscience; but in the very act of doing so, it pronounces all these external appliances to be utterly insufficient without a concurrent action of God from within the man. The real change it proclaims to be a change of "heart" or spiritual being; and that is the work of God. Born of a man who is flesh, and therefore flesh ourselves; we have to be born of another Man who is Spirit, that we too may become spiritual. And this other Man, of whom we have to be spiritually begotten, can beget, for He is our original Maker—the Lord from heaven. A race which includes God need not despair of Divine life; it can be divinely re-created from within itself. Think; to be a new creature! Men have fabled fancies of a fountain in which whoever bathed grew young again, his limbs restored to elasticity and his skin to clearness. To the old world it was as good a thing as priests could promise to the good, that when they died, the crossing of that dark and fateful river should be the blotting out for ever from the soul of all memorials of the past. But God gives us a better mercy than the blessing of forgetfulness. The Lethe which obliterates from recollection a sinful past is a poor hope compared to the blood of cleansing, which permits us to remember sin without distress, and confess it without alarm. With a new self, cut off from this dreadful moral continuity with the past, eased of one's inheritance of self-reproach, and made quick within with the seed of a new future, all things seem possible to a man. Old things pass away; all things become new. III. Here I turn to some in whose bosoms these warm words find cold response. It is very beautiful to think

of—this transformation of a man and of his life by the breath of God. Once you were as enthusiastic and hopeful about it as anybody. You desired it, you sought it; you believed and were converted. You found, certainly, a new peace, and for a while your world did seem a changed world and yourself a changed man. You walked lightly, like one grown young; you could praise, and love, and rejoice. But that is long ago. The novel pleasure of being religious faded out of your days, like evening red out of the sky; somehow the old world resumed its place about you, and you returned by degrees to the old life. To-day God has given us a new year, and with it He has sent us a new message—"To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart"; "to-day is the day of salvation." Dead again or never truly alive; what matters it? You surely do need now, at all events, the new heart and the new spirit. And the offer of it in Jesus Christ is as genuine and sincere as ever—to you as free as ever. The way to it lies through desire and petition and expectation. IV. In proposing that we should all inaugurate the year by seeking, before everything else, that breath of life, that inward renewing of the soul through the inbreathed Holy Spirit of Jesus, which makes us new, I propose what will ensure to all of us a real "new year." The new self will make all around it as good as new, though no actual change should pass on it; for, to a very wonderful extent, a man creates his own world. We project the hue of our own spirits on things outside. A bright and cheerful temper sees all things on their sunny side. A weary, uneasy mind drapes the very earth in gloom. Any great enthusiasm, which lifts a man above his average self for the time, makes him like a new man, and transfigures the universe in his eyes. Now, this power of human nature, when exalted through high and noble emotion, to make its own world, will be realised in its profoundest form when the soul is re-created by the free Spirit of God. Let God lift us above our old selves, and inspire us with no earthly, but with the pure flame of a celestial, devotion; let Him breathe into our hearts the noblest, freest of all enthusiasms, the enthusiasm for Himself; and to us all things will become new. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The new creation* :—I. THE RESEMBLANCE.

1. In both there is the production of a new order of things. From chaos of old, God, by His creative fiat, brought life, beauty, light, &c., and from the corrupt soul of man, by His redemptive power, He evolves high spiritual virtues. 2. In both there is the production of something new by the Divine agency. Who created the heavens and the earth? &c. God, and He only. Who creates a soul? The same glorious Being. 3. In both there is a production of the new according to a Divine plan. Every part of the universe is created on a plan. Science discovers this. In conversion it is so (Eph. ii. 10). 4. In both there is the production of the new for His own glory. "The heavens declare His glory." The conversion of men reveals the glory of God. 5. In both there is the production of the new in a gradual way. Geology and the Bible show that the work of creation is a very gradual work. It is so with the work of spiritual reformation—very gradual. II. THE DISSIMILARITY. 1. The one was produced out of nothing, the other from pre-existing materials. In conversion no new power is given to the soul, but the old ones are renovated and wrought into right action. 2. The one was effected without any obstructing force, the other is not. 3. The one was produced by mere fiat, the other requires the intervention of moral means. Nothing in the creation came between the work and the Divine will. In spiritual reformation it does; hence God had to bow the heavens and come down and become flesh. 4. The one placed man in a position material and insecure; the other placed him in a spiritual and safe abode. 5. The one develops and displays God as the absolute Spirit, the other as the Divine Man. (*Homilist.*) *The renovation of all things* :—1. The Church in heaven will be new in respect of the number of its members. 2. We now dwell in earthly bodies. These vile bodies will be changed, and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body. 3. It will be a new thing, and as happy as it will be new, to find ourselves freed from sin, and mingling with those, who, like us, are made perfect in holiness. 4. It will be a new thing to see all united in love. There will be no interfering passions, separate interests and party designs—no evil surmises and unfriendly insinuations. There will be one common interest, and one universal spirit of love to unite the whole. Jews and Gentiles, yea, angels and men will all meet in one assembly. 5. The saints, while on earth, experience a sensible delight in communion with God, and in the stated and occasional exercises of piety and devotion. But this delight is often interrupted by the infirmities of the flesh and the avocations of the world. In heaven the saints will be continually before God's throne, and will serve Him day and night. 6. Here we need the Word of God to instruct and quicken us. We

need threatenings to awaken us, promises to allure us, and precepts to guide us. We need sensible representations to affect the mind through the eye, and living sounds to reach the heart through the ear. But in heaven things will be new. There we shall be all eye, all ear, all intellect, all devotion and love. 7. Here we need the vicissitudes of day and night for labour and rest. But in heaven there is no need of a candle, for there is no night there; and no need of the sun, for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and Jesus is the light thereof. 8. Here we have our seasons of sorrow and affliction. Our joys are transient. In heaven things will be new. All friendship there will be the union of pure and immortal minds in disinterested benevolence to one another, and in supreme love to God. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *The gospel of the new life*:—I. IT IS A SAYING WHICH INDICATES CONSCIOUSNESS OF DIVINE POWER. II. IT IS A SAYING WHICH INDICATES A SUBLIME PLAN. III. IT IS A SAYING WHICH INDICATES TRANSCENDENT LOVE. Man is not to remain in a fallen condition. IV. IT IS A SAYING WHICH INDICATES THE MOST BLESSED AND TRIUMPHANT ANTICIPATIONS. (*Family Churchman.*) *The symbolism of the throne* is the symbolism of stability. It is the planted seat of power, the settled place whence authority springs. According to the paternal theory of government, the throne is the Father's chair, from which the household's law goes forth. Its very structure is suggestive. The throne lies upon the ground, broad and square and firm. Perpetuity is of the very essence of its nature. The waves of popular wrath rage and swell around it, the tides of public opinion ebb and flow; it, the centre of unity, the seat of authority, stands fast. This is the idea of the throne; and who shall deny that it is a most majestic one? Take the idea illustrated as we may see it in the life of any one of the great nationalities that have preserved their identity through long periods of time—take the story of England, with which we are familiar, and than which there could be no better for our purpose. Start with the throne on the day William the Norman set it up in the open space his sword had cleared, and follow its history, century by century, down to the present day. Mark how it stands unshaken as storm after storm of change sweeps over the face of the nation. Nobles conspire against it, ecclesiastics try to undermine it, popular risings threaten it, usurpers claim it, once democracy put it aside for a season, again peaceful revolution transfers it to a collateral line, but still the throne survives, the same that the Conqueror founded, the centre of authority, the centre of national unity, the centre of the whole people's associations, loyalties, and loves. What, then, is the truth that lies behind this symbolism of the throne? Briefly this, that in the universe of which we make a part there are two great principles at work; the principle of stability and the principle of change, and, furthermore, that the sovereignty—and this is the important point—belongs to the former—to the stability. (*W. R. Huntington, D.D.*) *Renewal*:—When the Almighty says, "Behold, I make all things new," He is giving expression, not to a suddenly formed purpose, not to an altered intention, but simply to a principle of action, a law of conduct by which we daily see that He does guide Himself now, and by which, so far as we know, He has guided Himself through the eternity of the past. In order to bring out the thought, let me lay down the general principle, that whatever thing is capable of life and growth, must, if it is to live and grow, be made the subject of continual renewal. Consider a plant growing in your window-garden. In one sense it is the same plant you put there a week or a month or a year ago; in another sense it is not the same. It has been continually taking in from the soil and from the atmosphere, through its roots and leaves, new material, and as continually it has been giving forth and putting away from itself the superfluous and dead products of the vital processes. As this is true of vegetable life, so is it true of animal life. It is true of man in both of his natures; true of him in his body, true of him in his soul. Nay, the principle is of still wider application. We may discern its working in the history of institutions. Societies, Churches, governments, all come under the law. It is God's law, "Behold, I make—yes, am continually making—all things new." He is for ever the Renewer. Life is God's purpose, not death; and this is the meaning of His renewals. Clearly as the Christian sees that this is a dying world, still more clearly is he bound to see that it is a world continually coming into possession of new heritages of life. (*Ibid.*) *God's work of renovation*:—Some boat is ashore. The timbers are fast breaking up. The cargo is washed away. The grim rib-work stands out on the horizon, the melancholy remnant of a sound and well-appointed vessel. No man would be proud to call himself the master of such a craft. A pile of noble buildings is burnt to the ground. No one would be particularly happy to call himself the lord

of those gaping windows and dropping timbers and unsafe foundations. If the owner had not capital to reconstruct his property, he would very soon take steps to get it off his hands. And so God can never glory in His sovereignty over a nature that is dissolved by death. The declaration of His continued sovereignty implies that the ruin shall yet be reversed. "He is not a God of the dead, but of the living." (*T. G. Selby.*) *The Christian hope respecting the world*:—Shelley calls this "a wrong world"; St. Paul, "a present evil world." They saw it alike, but the apostle put into the word "present" a hope that the wrong and evil world will at last yield to a right world. (*T. T. Munger, D.D.*) *Finality of good*:—"Music has taught us that it is impossible to end upon a discord." This was Dora Greenwell's way of putting the expectation expressed by the poet laureate, in the familiar lines:—

"O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill."

(*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*) *God's law of continuity*:—His making all things new in the regeneration will not be His making them out of nothing, but rather His remaking them. Look about you and see if this view of the matter, full of comfort as we shall find it, be not substantiated by all that we are able to observe of God's methods now. Do you anywhere find a new thing that is not in some way a product and result of an older thing? We are tempted into taking the despairing view of God's law of renewal, because we think that the past is not only gone, but lost. This is a blunder. Nothing is lost of which we preserve the precious results. Your childhood, for example, is gone, but it is not lost. You could not be the man or the woman you are, save for that childhood's having been. How then can you say that your childhood is lost? It lives on in your mature character. No other childhood could have produced precisely the man or woman you are to-day. This continuity, this keeping up of the chain of connection, is what is really meant by that much used and much abused word, "evolution." This is God's way. He draws the new out of the old, not violently but slowly, gradually, continuously. The old that is fading away and ready to perish does not actually perish until the new one has been grafted upon it. Take that very best of all living products the world can show, a Christian character; how did it become what it is? Suddenly? Abruptly? No; but by the quiet, gradual, patient shaping and moulding of the hand of the Spirit. The saintliness of St. Paul is different from the saintliness of St. John. Why? Because John differed from Saul at the start; and even in recreating them God would not neglect His own law of continuity. Sainted, they are just as much unlike each other as they were unsainted. In making all things new for both of them, He that sitteth upon the throne has respected and preserved the identity of each. We see the same law holding in the larger life of the whole Church. The Christian Church of this nineteenth century is certainly different, in very many ways, from the Church of the Crusades, for instance, as that in its turn differed from the Church of the catacombs and the martyrs, and yet it was one holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church through all the generations, the same body from first to last. Nay, we may push the principle further still in the same direction, and affirm that from the dawn of history there has always been a Church on earth, always an elect people of God, and that the Church of the gospel is joined to the Church of the law and the prophets by ties and ligaments that bleed if you attempt to sever them. But let us lift our thoughts to their grandest and best fulfilment. How will it be with the new heavens and the new earth? Will they be cut off by an impassable gulf of oblivion from all the memories, all the associations, all the home feeling of the old life? No, we do not so read the mind of God either in His works or His Word. His way of making all things new is not by the utter destruction and annihilation of the old, but rather by the remoulding and readjustment of it. Nothing could be more new than was the resurrection life of Christ, and yet how intricately, how indissolubly was it wrapped up with the old life out of which it came forth. And as with the resurrection body of the Christ so with His body mystical, His Church, there will be change, adaptation to new conditions, fitness for larger and fuller life, and yet at the same time a continuity, a remembrance of the battles and the victories—yes, and of the defeats—of the far back militant days, when on the old earth and under the old heavens and before the former things had passed, it lived and struggled and endured. (*Ibid.*) *The course of Divine justice*:—This was the culmination of the fearful scenes which had passed before the apostle as the vision

of the course of Divine judgment was unrolled before him. At length, when these fearful works of judgment are completed, he saw the great white throne and Him that sat upon it, and the earth and the heaven fled away. Then the books were opened, and the dead, both small and great, who stood before God, were judged, every man according to his works. Then it is, after this awful consummation, that the apostle sees a new heaven and a new earth, and He that sat upon the great white throne said, "Behold I make all things new." Such in brief is the burden of the Book of Revelation. It will be observed that it involves these two cardinal points. First the judgment and extirpation of all that is evil by woes, fearful struggles and agonies. And secondly, after all these terrible experiences, all things are made new. The first part of the process of the Divine administration consists of a series of scenes of misery, distress, and bloodshed than which nothing more terrible can be imagined. Visions of the destruction of the elements of human society, even of the heaven and the earth, are brought before us, until men are reduced to cry to the very mountains and rocks to cover them. These dread scenes, these fearful judgments are depicted as inevitable preliminaries in the manifestation of the Divine will, the establishment of the Divine kingdom. The New Testament begins with a promise of peace, and it ends with a vision of peace and glory, in which God will wipe all tears from off all faces. But the warnings conveyed to us through the last apostle are that this blessed consummation cannot be reached except through the manifestation of Divine justice on the earth, which will bring upon the earth and mankind inconceivable miseries. The Book of Revelation, in its fearful scenes, is but a true description of the actual experience of mankind. The slaughters, plagues, and other dreadful visitations which that book depicts have, as a matter of fact, been realised. It is through scenes of suffering of this nature that the world is being conducted by Divine justice to its ultimate goal. But we have the more reason to be inexpressibly thankful that the goal revealed is one of peace and bliss. When we bear in mind the miseries and agonies of the Book of Revelation, we recognise the full force of the promise with which it concludes. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," &c. Seeing what the world has been hitherto, and the miseries by which it is beset now, we might well despair of such a result unless we had the express assurance of Revelation that there is One sitting upon the throne who gives this as the very definition of His work, "Behold I make all things new." We should indeed be ungrateful not to recognise that the state of things around us tends in itself to give us some earnest of this blessed renovation. Still no men feel more gravely than those who have the conduct of human affairs how slight would be our hope of a complete peace on earth did it depend simply upon the wisdom and strength of even the wisest leaders of mankind. They cannot extirpate the passions which are the real ultimate cause of the miseries wars bring upon us. All our hope lies in the assured faith that all the terrible scenes which the earth has witnessed are under the control of Him that sitteth upon the throne working out the great purpose of true justice, of Him who counts all men, small and great, as subject to His unerring judgment. Finally, when the issues of right and wrong have been worked in this world in a way vindicating truth and righteousness, God will fulfil that good work on which He is even now engaged—the making of all things new. We are not able with our limited earthly vision to discern the work of God from the beginning of the world, His mysterious methods for establishing His kingdom and making His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We must submit to take our part, whatever it may be, in His mysterious dispensations, possessing our souls in patience with such assurance as the words of His Book can alone supply. Our personal private lives reflect in greater or less degree the stern experiences which this book describes in the case of the world at large. We have our sins, and as the consequence of our sins our sufferings, and sorrows, hindrances, and fears. We must expect to bear them in greater or less degree until the moment of our departure arrives, and by God's grace we are allowed in some measure to anticipate the privilege which is held out to the world. This is our own ultimate hope, the blessed promise that God will make all things new, not merely afterwards, but if we will trust and do His will in our hearts and souls, while we are still upon earth. (*H. Wace, D.D.*) It is done.—*Life done* :—It is very solemn to think that we shall one day look back to our own lives, and all on earth will be past and done. "It is done." How the word brings us to a standstill, taking us to the end of all things! And surely here is the only true way to look at life. We do not value what looks fair to the eye, but what is real and enduring. We do not praise a promising plan, but a successful result. Wisdom is that which gains its end. In a burning house,

this whole matter was planned, arranged, and settled by the foresight and decree of eternity. 2. It was next as the Lamb that He loved us and proved His love. He did not give us words of love merely when He came from heaven to earth; but He proceeded to deeds of truest affection. The supreme proof of His love was that He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. 3. Love in marriage must be on both sides, and it is as the Lamb that we first came to love Him. I had no love to Christ, how could I have, till I saw His wounds and blood? This is the great heart-winning doctrine. Christ loves us as the Lamb, and we love Him as the Lamb. 4. Further, marriage is the most perfect union. Surely, it is as the Lamb that Jesus is most closely joined to His people. Our Lord came very close to us when He took our nature, for thus He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. 5. We never feel so one with Jesus as when we see Him as the Lamb. IV. THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE BRIDE: "His wife hath made herself ready." Up till now the Church has always been spoken of as His bride, now she is "His wife"—that is a deeper, dearer, more-matured word than "bride": "His wife hath made herself ready." The Church has now come to the fulness of her joy, and has taken possession of her status and dower as "His wife." What does it mean—"hath made herself ready"? 1. It signifies, first, that she willingly and of her own accord comes to her Lord, to be His, and to be with Him for ever. This she does with all her heart: "she hath made herself ready." She does not enter into this engagement with reluctance. 2. Does it not mean that she has put away from herself all evil, and all connection with the corruptions of the harlot church has been destroyed? She has struggled against error, she has fought against infidelity, and both have been put down by her holy watchfulness and earnest testimony; and so she is ready for her Lord. 3. Does it not also mean that in the great day of the consummation the Church will be one? Alas, for the divisions among us! 4. Notice what the preparation was. It is described in the eighth verse: "To her was granted." I will go no further. Whatever preparation it was that she made, in whatever apparel she was arrayed, it was granted to her. When we shall be united to Jesus, the ever blessed Lamb, in endless wedlock, all our fitness to be there will be ours by free grant. Look at the apparel of the wife, "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." How simple her raiment! Only fine linen, clean and white! The more simple our worship, the better. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The bride of Christ*:—I. THE CHURCH'S FINAL BLESSEDNESS IS FOUND IN AN INDISSOLUBLE UNION WITH CHRIST. II. FOR THIS THE CHURCH IS PREPARED BY SANCTITY AND FIDELITY. III. THE ULTIMATE BLESSEDNESS OF THE SAINTS IS THE OCCASION OF JOY TO ALL. "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (R. Green.) *The righteousness of saints*.—*Saintly ideals*:—A very slight acquaintance with the lives of those who may most truly be called saints will satisfy us that they are not all cast in one mould. On the contrary, they are characterised by an almost infinite variety, diversity, and even contrariety of form. But beneath all this contrariety, diversity, and variety, there may be traced a fundamental unity, a substantial identity. Features and form are endlessly different; the spirit is one. I do not speak now of the mere surroundings and outward circumstances of a life. Riches and poverty, solitude and society, sickness and health, all may be said to come alike to it; inasmuch as it is independent of all, and can turn all to good account. We may represent human life, the life of each one of us, to ourselves, as a series of concentric circles, circle within circle, all having the same centre, and that centre being the "I," the soul, the spirit, the will, the very substance of our human personality, call it by what name we will. What we describe as the "circumstances" of our lives will be represented by the outermost of these concentric circles. But we may pass inwards from one to another on our way to the centre of all, and still find endless variety and diversity, and yet the saintly life still. Thus we will take what is certainly much nearer to the centre than the circle already described, which was that of outward circumstance and surrounding. We will take the circle of ritual and worship, which, you will all agree, touches the soul much more nearly than the outward form or fashion of our lives does or can do. Let our thoughts range back over the history of this our own beloved place of worship. What changes and varieties of ritual has it not witnessed in the course of the many centuries that have elapsed between its first conversion from a pagan temple into a Christian Church, and the present moment! Each generation in turn has worshipped here after its own fashion, now with Roman splendour, and now with Puritan simplicity. Better the coldest, barest, ugliest ritual, with spiritual edification, than the costliest

Omega, the beginning and the end." From the commencement of our era, the words have been felt to form one of the sublimest descriptions of Him in whom we have believed. Let us see how and with what results they may be adopted as a true description of our blessed Lord. 1. Now there is a habit of mind common in our day with regard to religious truth, the habit of dwelling with a morbid particularity upon minute objections, and forgetting the broad evidence upon which the general structure of the faith is built. The description of our Lord in the text, as the Alpha and Omega, suggests one of these broader lines of evidence. If it be true that Christ Jesus is in His Person and in His doctrine the central figure in the world's history, that His life and ministry is the key which unlocks the mysteries of God's providence, then we have surely here a solid argument that we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We may begin by reminding you of the manifest preparation for Christ's appearance through the previous ages of the world. We will take up the Old Testament, not now as inspired, but simply as a most ancient history, and it is surely unparalleled how in the multiplicity of books which make up the Bible, through all the varied maze of narrative, poetry, philosophy, runs ever in deep undertone the idea of One who should be in His day the author of a new era of holiness and truth. The world's history, so marvellously is the thread of Jewish life woven into the web of the old world's life, the world's history before Christ points unto Christ. And not less remarkable is that which follows. There are two great facts, it has been said, which are standing witnesses to the truth of the Christian revelation, the Israelitish race and the Catholic Church. The former in their earlier career, in their disruption and dispersion within our Lord's generation, exhibits a destiny unmistakably mixed up with Him. The latter, notwithstanding the sully of its first purity, the dissolution of its first unity, notwithstanding the slowness of its progress in some ages, its withdrawal from certain districts in others, is still the section of the human family in which all that is noble and great in man is developed. And when we contemplate the life of Christ, still more markedly does He vindicate to Himself the title of "the Alpha and Omega," with all the claims therein involved. The character of Christ is the fulfilment and embodiment of the conscience of humanity. A marvellous testimony it is, that unbelief ventures not to touch the ark of that immaculate purity; on the contrary, with but the single exception of a single infidel's after-thought (Vide Notes to Shelley's Poems), it recognises Him frankly as the pattern man. In Him, it is granted, and in Him alone, gentleness never degenerates into weakness, nor wisdom into craft, nor severity into harshness. And it adds to the force of these thoughts, that although, when the life of Christ in all the ineffable beauty of its Divine lineaments is presented to it, the heart of humanity throbs at once in sympathy; yet human philosophy never imagined beforehand the character. And not less observable is it that no man has ever reproduced that image. The saints have copied it in their measure since it was unveiled to mortal vision; but just as it was said of the heathen, that being unable to comprehend God as a whole, they broke up the Deity into fragments, and worshipped one or other of His attributes apart from the rest; so has it been with the followers of Christ. They have seized upon portions of His character, and imitated Him, some in meekness, some in boldness, some in patience, but not one of all the mighty assembly of the saints has individually presented again to the world the complete likeness of his Lord. And in this, the very imperfection of their discipleship, have they been witnesses to His divinity. "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Is it indeed so that in Him is at once the source and limit of all our conceptions of the holy and the good, the measure of truth, and purity, and love? Then what an argument is here for rendering unto Him our worship, and building on Him our hopes. 2. And when we pass from the person of Christ to the system of Christianity, we find yet another illustration of the text. The sublime title there claimed belongs to Him upon this ground also, that in the Christian faith is to be found the alone instrument for purifying and consolidating society. There are two characteristics of our blessed Lord's teaching and example, which are well worthy of note under this head. The first is, that those precepts which are most startling, such as the unconditional forgiveness of injuries, non-resistance of evil, benefiting those from whom no return is possible, whilst like Christ's own character they were never anticipated by man, are yet the only precepts which we can conceive the Lord God to give His creatures. We recognise their Divinity by the light of what they have wrought. The second speciality of the character as proposed in the preaching and pattern of Christ, is its universal adaptability. It stands equally detached from, yet equally blended with, poverty and

wealth, youth and age, learning and ignorance. The more you compare Christ as a teacher with any other teacher, the more conspicuously does He stand forth as the Alpha and Omega of all practical righteousness. And this view of our Lord's teaching, we may observe in passing, throws a fresh light upon His miracles. Those miracles were not marvels designed simply to arrest attention, they were indications of the character in which He came. That He is the Renewer of all that is broken and worn and corrupt in humanity; that alike for the moral diseases of the soul, as for the miseries of this earthly life, He is the one everliving Physician; that in His religion lies the only cure for our individual and social ills, the only sure principle of union and benevolence; this is the truth which underlies all those wonders of omnipotence—the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead. If of all truth He is the "Beginning and the End," superseding or concluding in His religion all other methods of educating man, then if miracles upon men's bodies are to be shadows of His work upon the heart, the stamp on the visible of His office towards the invisible, I should expect, that whilst in former ages miraculous cures might be worked occasionally by great renovators of society, herein types of Him, yet that in His life this miraculous agency would culminate, and that after Him (not perhaps suddenly and sharply, for God's providences ever shade off gradually into each other) miracles would cease. And this is just the Scripture account. The Bible recognises a miraculous gift in prophets and apostles, but in strict subordination, both in number and authority, to His wonder-working; leaving Him still distinctly witnessed unto as the Alpha and Omega of all moral healing. "I have seen the end of all perfection, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Who then will not bow down his head and worship before Him—the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last? There is a double moral cowardice amongst us from which the cause of truth equally suffers, first, the moral cowardice of those who, not daring to proclaim their entire unbelief in Revelation, profess to receive the cardinal doctrines of Christ, and question and cavil at those which are offshoots therefrom; hiding the broader scepticism under the veil of a less. The second exhibition of moral cowardice is that of the men who do believe firmly, but shrink from confessing their faith, and so love to speak of Christian doctrines and facts under a sort of vague philosophical terminology, thus undermining their own steadfastness and withholding their testimony from the truth. Against these two forms of evil let my last words warn, urging you to a manly confession, in your speech, and in your lives, of Christ Jesus before men, as the Alpha and the Omega of all that has been, and shall be. (*Bp. Woodford.*) *Alpha and Omega*:—I. THE DESCRIPTION, which contains the speaker's character. 1. It regards His personal nature, and shows the duration and immutability of His being. 2. It regards agency, and is intended to express not only its continuance, but its peculiarity and exclusiveness; that He is the commencer, and that He is the completer; that in all influences He is all and in all. First, let us look at creation. Here, it is true, He is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." "Without Him was not anything made that was made." Secondly, let us look at salvation; and here it is equally true that He is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Thirdly, in providence. Fourthly, in the Church He is Alpha and Omega. II. Let us proceed to consider THE PROMISE, in which we shall find the sinner's hope, and therefore our hope. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." 1. The excellence of the blessing itself. Observe the representation; it is water—it is water from the fountain. He is a fountain; always full, always flowing, always fresh. 2. The manner in which it is to be imparted—"freely." Worthiness has no recommendation here, and unworthiness has no barrier. 3. The distinction by which the recipients are characterised. "I will give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely." Enjoyment does not arise only from the excellency of the object, but from its adaptation to our state, to our wants, to our wishes, and to our hopes. Then the gratification it affords is satisfaction; and this is the case here. Without this thirst, what is even the water of life itself? (*W. Jay.*) *The beginning and the end.*—*The beginning and the end*:—"It is done." There is often a difficulty not of the reason so much as of the imagination, in thinking that anything will end, or at least anything in which we are actively interested. Men look out for a graduated sequence in the course of events. Catastrophes, we are told—catastrophes are discredited. Why events ever began to succeed each other at all, to what events are tending as their final goal—these vital questions are never raised; but this one-sided way of looking at the facts of life is seized upon greedily

by the imagination, which thus will clog and choke the equitable action of the reason, will throw unwelcome facts into an arbitrarily-chosen background, will involve plain conclusions in some cloud of mystic indefiniteness, and will thus create a confidence that, somehow or other, things will for ever go on very much as they do. Now this appears, first of all, in the power we many of us have of putting aside altogether the thought of death. You are a young man or woman just entering life; will you be, some little time hence, admired, well spoken of, or the reverse? You do not know. Will your family life, some years hence, be a centre of warm affection, or a scene of unspeakable discomfort and misery? You do not know. You do not know how you will die, but of the inevitableness and certainty of death itself you are, or you ought to be, as well assured as of your own existence. Each stroke of the bell echoes the voices of the angels, echoes the voice of God—"It is done," "It is done." And the same difficulty of entering into the fact that that which exists now, and here, will come to an utter end, appears in our way of thinking about organised human life, about society. You study a section of human history, you mark man's progress from a lower to a higher stage, you observe the steps of social and political growth; the task of imagination in conceiving that it will all utterly end becomes increasingly difficult. It looks so stable and so strong, so vigorous, so justly self-reliant, so based upon high courage, upon keen sagacity, upon hard common-sense, that nothing, it seems, can avail to shake it. It is so easy to put out of account that which is not obtruded upon the sight, to make no allowance for the unforeseen, to assume that the apparent is the real, and that the real of to-day is always permanent; and so men drift on until something happens that startles the world out of its dream of security. And still more difficult do men find it to accustom themselves to the conviction that one day this earthly home on which we live will itself be the scene of a vast physical catastrophe. The course of nature—the phrase itself helps to disguise from us the truth—the course of nature seems so ascertained, and, within certain limits, so unvarying, that the mind recoils from the thought that one day all this ordered sequence of movement, of life, of growth, and of decay, will suddenly cease, buried in the ruins of a vast catastrophe. Law, it seems, will effectually prevent the occurrence of any such catastrophe; it could only, we are told, be anticipated even by an apostle in the unscientific age. Now, let us observe that such a catastrophe need by no means imply the complete cessation of what we call law, but only the suspension of some lower law or laws through the imperial intervention of a higher law. We see this suspension of lower by higher laws constantly going on around us; indeed, it is an almost necessary accompaniment of man's activity on the surface of this planet. You and I never lift our arms without so far suspending and defying the ordinary operation of the law of gravitation. St. Peter, when arguing against the scoffers of his day that because all things continued as they were from the beginning, therefore the promise of Christ's coming had become practically worthless, points to the flood, points to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And yet these catastrophes were brought about by the operation of existing laws; and if this was so, is it inconceivable that He, in whose hands and whose workmanship we are, should have in His illimitable universe other and more imperative laws beyond even those which more immediately surround our puny life?—moral laws which have their roots in the necessities of His eternal being, and not mere physical laws which He has made to be just what they are according to His own good pleasure. These are the three elements involved in the Christian representation of the second coming of Christ: the end of all human probations, the final dissolution of the organised or social life of mankind, the destruction of man's present home on the surface of the globe—there is nothing in them, to say the very least, violently contrary to our present experience, nothing more than an extension of the facts of which we have present experience. Individual life abounds with the presages, with the presentiments, of death. The aggregate life of man, human society, contains within itself many a solvent which threatens its ruin, and the planet which we inhabit is a ball of fire, which may easily one day pour out over its fair surface the pent-up forces which already surge and boil beneath our feet. And when all is over, what will remain? "He said unto me, It is done; I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." God, the Almighty, the All-wise, the Compassionate; God, the Infinite, the Immeasurable, the Eternal Father, Son and Spirit, undivided essence; God remains. There are two principal reflections which you should try to take home with you. One is the insignificance of our present life. It is natural that, so long as they can, those who believe in no future life should exagger-

ate the worth of this; it is indeed their all, and when before their eyes it begins to break up, they have no resource but despair. But we Christians have a hope, sure and steadfast, of a future which is infinitely greater than the present, and which can assure to our immortal spirit true union with Him who is the true end of its existence, a satisfaction which is here impossible for us. The instability and perishableness of all human things are but a foil to the eternal life of God. And the other reflection is the immense importance of life. Yet, this life, so brief, so transient, so insignificant, so made up as it is of trifles, of petty incidents, of unimportant duties, is the scene upon which, in the case of every one of us, issues are decided, the importance of which it is impossible to exaggerate, issues immense, issues irreversible. (*Canon Liddon.*) **I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.**—*The free invitation of the gospel*:—I. THE BLESSINGS HERE OFFERED—"the fountain of the water of life." The figure is descriptive of the inestimable worth and efficacy of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is a living stream, flowing from the throne of God, through the waste howling wilderness of this world. II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE OFFER IS MADE. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life." He who is athirst is just the individual who is destitute of, and ardently longing for, happiness. III. THE FREENESS BY WHICH THE GOSPEL OFFER IS CHARACTERISED. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Such is the munificence of our gracious Benefactor, that He will not sell His benefits. (*P. Grant.*) *The fountain of the water of life*:—I. THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH THE LORD JESUS REPRESENTS HIMSELF. The Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Ascended up on high, far above all principalities and powers, He is constituted Head over all things to the Church; and from Him, as an inexhaustible fountain, all spiritual and eternal blessings flow. II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM A BLESSING IS HERE PROMISED BY the Alpha and Omega are those who are athirst. They alone will receive with gratitude the boon which He so graciously offers. III. THE BLESSING TO BE BESTOWED IS WATER—the water of life. This expression denotes the various benefits procured for man by the adorable Redeemer, and which are distinctly set forth in the Gospel; more especially the influences of the Holy Spirit, by which alone that mighty transformation is produced on the human soul. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS BLESSING WILL BE BESTOWED next demands our consideration—"freely." The precious benefits here referred to are a free, unmerited boon, wholly undeserved on the part of man, and graciously of His free favour bestowed by God. It is when, as a helpless debtor, he has not one farthing to pay, that he is frankly forgiven all. (*T. Bissland, M.A.*) *Good news for thirsty souls*:—I. EXPLANATION. 1. All souls by nature are in great and dire want. Our Lord here speaks of those who are "athirst," and thirst is the index of one of our most pressing necessities. If this thirst be not quenched you are in a desperate plight indeed. 2. Some persons begin to be conscious of their soul's great need, and these are they of whom the Saviour speaks as "athirst": they have a dreadful want, and they know it. I would have you know that frequently those are the most thirsty who thirst to thirst. 3. Thirst is a desire arising out of a need. Now, so long as you have that desire, you need not stop to question your right to take Christ. A man is thirsty, even if he cannot explain what thirst is and how it comes. 4. The text promiseth water from the fountain of life to the man that is athirst; but thirst cannot quench thirst. Some seekers act as if they thought it would. "Oh," say they, "I am not thirsty enough; I wish I felt my need more": but your thirst will not be quenched by being increased. "I should have some hope," says one, "if I were more sensible of my danger." Yet that is not a gospel hope. Why should a man's despairing because of his danger operate to deliver him from danger? As long as you stop where you are you may get more and more sensible of danger until you reach the sensitiveness of morbid despondency; but you will be no nearer salvation. It is not your sense of need, it is Christ's power to bless you, and your yielding yourself up to Christ, that will bring you salvation. II. ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ keeps open house for all thirsty ones. "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." 2. Now, as if it were not enough to keep open house, our Lord Jesus goes further; for He issues many invitations of the freest kind (*Isa. lv. 1*). 3. Does any one say, "Well, I know that the ever-blessed Saviour keeps open house, and that He invites men freely; but still I am afraid to come"? Peradventure, we may overcome your diffidence if we remind you that our Lord makes a proclamation, which has the weight of His personal dignity about it, and comes as from a king

(John vii. 37). 4. Peradventure a trembler replies, "Ay! here is a proclamation; but I should be more comforted if I could read promises." Our text is one of the freest promises possible, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Come and test the promise now, and see if it be not true. But if you require another, turn to Isa. xli. 17. 5. Our gracious Lord, still further to encourage souls to come to Him, has been pleased to give many gracious explanations of what He meant. You will find one in the fourth chapter of John. How sweetly He explained to the woman at the well what living water is, and what drinking of it is. 6. Furthermore, our Lord, in order to make this very plain, has set before us lively emblems. Rock in wilderness. Also see Psa. cvii. 5. 7. Our Lord has given us, besides, many encouraging instances of men who have thirsted for grace (Psa. xlii., lxii.). 8. Our Lord has been pleased to give His own special blessing to the thirsty ones; for, when He opened His mouth upon the mountain and gave out the benedictions which commence His memorable sermon, He said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst," &c. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The fountain of the water of life*:—I. THE PROMISER is also the Giver. II. THE GIFT is Himself. III. THE EFFECTS. Water softens, fertilises, satisfies. IV. THE RECEIVER. 1. There is one qualification needful in order that we may share the gift, and only one—desire. 2. There is great wisdom in God's mentioning this qualification. (1) Those who have nothing but this desire would be likely, in very humility, to abstain from asking unless they had special encouragement. But this very cause of despondency is made a ground of hope. (2) None others could value the gift. (*Homilist*.) He that overcometh shall inherit all things.—*Overcoming*:—The Bible closes with a great outburst of hope and courage. The words I have quoted are words that correspond to many others which are to be found in the Book of Revelation—promises to him that overcometh. I ask at once what is meant by the overcoming that is spoken of again and again in the earlier chapters as well as in this later chapter of the great Book? There is no special difficulty, there is no peculiar struggle of the life spoken of. It takes life as a trial, and represents the great relationship which man is to hold to life. He that overcometh, not this or that special difficulty, not this or that peculiar struggle in which he is engaged, but he that in his whole life comes forth as victor, it is to him that the great promises are given. And we recognise at once, and think something which occurs to us in all our observation of the world, in all the experience of our life—the way in which man is either overcome by this world or overcomes this world. Either it becomes his master or it becomes his slave; he gets it under his feet or is trampled under its feet. We do not know what may be beyond, what new experiences, what other trials, what other chances and new opportunities may be offered to the soul that has failed in this world, but we do know that there are failures in this world and we do know that there are successes. And every man has it in his power to conquer the world, for man is stronger than circumstance, because man is the child of God and circumstance is only the arrangement of God for the service, the development, and education of His children. What is it to overcome? It is to know that the one great power that is in this universe is our power. We talk about power, and men may grow conceited as they lift themselves up and say, "I will be strong and conquer the world." Ah! it is not to be done so. There is one real and true strength in this universe, and that is God's strength, and no man ever did any strong thing yet that God did not do that strong thing in him. A man makes himself full of strength only as the trumpet makes itself full, by letting it be held at the lips of the trumpeter; so only man lets himself be made strong as he lets himself be held in the hand of God. As the chisel is powerless—if it tries to carve a statue by itself it goes tumbling and stumbling over the precious surface of the stone—as the chisel becomes itself filled and inspired with genius when it is put into the hand of the artist; so man, putting himself into the hand of God, loses his awkwardness as well as his feebleness, and becomes full of the graciousness and the strength of the perfect nature. Know God your Father; recognise what your baptism means, that it was the claiming of your soul for the Father-soul of God; give yourself to Him in absolute, loving obedience. Give yourself to Him as the child gives himself to the father as the most natural and true thing in all your life; and then, His power glowing through your power, the world shall become yours as it is His, and in overcoming you shall inherit all things—inherit, because they are your Father's, so they shall become yours. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks*.) *The character and blessing of him that overcometh*:—What, then, are the qualifications of him who would fight successfully? 1. The first is faith;

such is the express and repeated declaration of Scripture. "This is the victory that overcometh the world," &c. 2. Secondly, he who overcometh must exercise constant and unremitting watchfulness. In the spiritual, as in mortal warfare, the hour of fancied security is that of most evident danger. When you blindly indulge the wishes which arise in your hearts, or follow unguardedly the maxims and example of the world, you wilfully expose yourselves to the most imminent hazard of being betrayed into sudden misery and danger. 3. A third, and the most important weapon in the hand of him who overcometh, is prayer. Weak, indeed, are the children of men, wavering in their opinion, inconstant in their affections, inconsistent in their conduct. To vessels, thus weak, thus insufficient, thus destitute of power in themselves, there is strength from on high. 4. Another of the requisites in him that overcometh is self-denial. We are seldom just judges of what is truly for our own benefit. Even in the plainest cases of duty we are often miserably misled by passions, prejudices, or evil inclinations. The ruling passion, the favourite inclination, of every man is, in fact, his weak side, through which he is most apt to be betrayed into the sin that doth most easily beset him. Here, therefore, the prudent man is particularly on his guard, lest he should be betrayed by it, and brought to experience the truth, that for all things God will bring him to judgment. 5. Lastly, it is essential to him that overcometh, that he persevere. There are many who set out in life with a fair outward appearance of success. They contend for truth with energy and zeal, but, by degrees, their zeal waxes cold, their energies abate, lassitude and indifference creep upon them, religion wearies and disgusts. They begin by entertaining doubts as to some of its doctrines, and by throwing off all respect for its precepts. (*The Scottish Pulpit.*)

The battle of sonship and the inheritance of the conqueror:—The great hindrance to our full belief of all such words as these lies in the very grandeur of the truth to be believed. We turn from the mighty inheritance promised to the Christian conqueror to survey our own lives; and because amidst their poverty and insignificance, their low earthly tendencies and deep spiritual infirmities, we can discover no traces of a battle whose results will be so sublime, we find the promise hard to be believed. But yet the very position of this promise at the end of the last book of God's revelation, shows that it is simply the natural and necessary result of redemption, and therefore belongs with all its greatness to every redeemed man. It is not an end to be sought by the greatest souls alone, but is the birthright of every faithful man. And the lowest, poorest Christian on earth may see, by looking beneath the outward things of life into life's spiritual meaning, that he is actually fighting a battle, which, if he do but fight out faithfully, will render him an heir of all that God can give, or immortality bestow.

I. WHY DOES OUR SONSHIP DEMAND A CONFLICT? We must begin by laying down two facts, which prepare the way for the answer, and avoid two errors into which we are prone to fall. 1. The struggle is not to become sons of God; it results from our being so already. The grace by which God makes us feel that we are His sons—that we could not have made ourselves such—gives rise to a conflict in the soul. The power of the Holy Spirit acting on our nature creates at once a spiritual war. The faith that closes the weary effort to make ourselves God's children, in the belief that we are such, creates at once a deep life-long struggle. The love that flows into our hearts from God witnessing to our adoption, transforms our hearts into fields of battle. 2. The conflict rising from sonship is not created by any outward circumstances, but by the state of the soul itself, in all conditions of life and ages of time. Take the first moment in which a man hears God's voice, and becomes conscious of the Divine summons, and you will see how the battle begins. Aroused, perhaps, by trial, sorrow, the sense of life's vanity, he sets out as a pilgrim of the eternal. In the first dim twilight of spiritual life there comes to him the voice of God. At once it seems to isolate him; he feels alone with God and his sin; he discovers the awfulness of individuality. Then commence the first clashings of the spiritual war of which his soul is the battle-field. The earthly and the heavenly, the human and the Divine, the selfish and the holy, conflict in one loud storm of emotion.

II. WHY MUST THE CONFLICT BE PERPETUAL? Is there no earthly state in which it will cease? Can we achieve the victory only on the heavenly side of the grave? I answer, it must be long as life, because the old war between the two natures manifests itself in three forms, from which there is no escape. 1. The spirit pants for the invisible—the flesh for the visible world. Is it not manifest that there can be no pause, no safety, no repose, till God crowns us as victors in His heaven? 2. The spirit lives in God—the flesh creates temptation to oppose Him. If it be true that all life's circum-

stances—solitude or companionship, wealth or poverty, joy or sorrow, ease or labour, are filled with temptations, through the shadowy power of the carnal, where can there be a pause in the battle but on the deathless side of the grave? 3. The tendency of the flesh is to be a creature of circumstances: that of the spirit is to be their king. Carnal men move in masses, are swayed by every influence, lose their individuality, and become slaves to the spirit of the world. All spiritual men have found that this loneliness, this separation *with* God, formed part of their life-struggle. And this, too, is an undying form of our battle as sons of God. "Worship success, gold, power," is the cry of the carnal. "Worship God and measure life by heavenly laws," is the voice of the spiritual. Translate your commonplace toils into this meaning, and they become transfigured. You, in your obscure sphere of work, if you are true to heavenly laws, are in spirit a great warrior. You are taking a part in the spiritual battle of the ages, and if faithful unto death, the full glory of perfected sonship will be yours. "He that overcometh shall be My son." III. THE INHERITANCE OF THE CONQUEROR. "He shall inherit all things." The very conquest of the carnal nature brings us so near to God that all things become our own. 1. Our struggles become our possessions. 2. Inheriting God, we inherit all things. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The conqueror's reward and the coward's doom:—I. THE FOUNTAIN FOR THE SONS OF MEN. II. THE CONQUEROR AND HIS REWARD. As believers we are saved, as conquerors we get the recompense. 1. The inheritance of all things. We are heirs of God; joint-heirs with Christ. 2. The Divine portion. "I will be his God"—a repetition of Abraham's blessing (Gen. xvii. 7). Does not this include everything? (1 Cor. iii. 21, 23). 3. The Divine adoption. The conqueror becomes a son, and all that is contained in sonship is his, all the paternal love, all the Divine patrimony, all the endless glory. III. THE COWARD'S DOOM (ver. 8). Though the "fearful" or coward is specially singled out here, yet there are others associated with him in his awful doom. They are all of earth, sons of Adam, men—not devils. 1. The fearful. This means the cowards who refused to come out from the world and join Christ, though their consciences urged them; who shrunk from confessing Christ; who, through fear of men, of the world, of their good name, of earthly honour and gain, either kept their religion to themselves or threw it away. 2. The unbelieving. These are the rejecters of Christ. Oh the hatefulness of unbelief! What must it be to refuse God's testimony to His Son! to refuse that Son Himself! 3. The abominable. Those who were partakers of the abominations and filthiness mentioned before (xvii. 4)—revellings, banquetings, riots, blasphemies. 4. Murderers. Whose hands are red with blood; whose heart is full of angry passions, envy, malice, revenge, grudging; whose lips give vent to irritating and angry words. 5. Whoremongers. All who give way to their lusts, who live in uncleanness; those whose eyes are full of adultery, and who cannot cease from this sin. 6. Sorcerers. They who have taken part in Babylon's sorceries and witchcrafts; all allies of the evil one, and workers of the lying wonders of the last days. 7. Idolaters. Not only the heathen worshippers of graven images, but all who have chosen another god; who love the creature more than the Creator; who worship mammon, pleasure, art, splendour, or gold, for "covetousness is idolatry." 8. All liars. All who speak falsely in any way; who practise dishonesty; who care not for truth. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The saints inheriting all things:—*The little child believes that all things belong to it, and claims everything it can touch, book, or toy, or picture, stretching out its hands for the moon with a divine sense of ownership. And the child is not wrong: the child is never wrong in its spontaneous conduct, acting out what God puts into it, reflecting the thought of the face that its spirit beholds. All things do belong to it, and are withheld only while it is in its spiritual minority for purposes of discipline, and until it learns to distinguish between the good and the evil. But at last God's children become heirs, inherit, and all things become theirs. (*T. T. Munger.*) *I will be his God, and he shall be My son.—The restored sonship:—*I. Let us think of what is conveyed to us here, when God promises that HE WILL BE OUR GOD. He is the God of all the world now, for He rules it, and is calling men out of it; and whether they honour Him or not, He presides over them, and directs their destinies after the counsel of His own almighty will. Still, God is not the same to man now as He was to him before he fell from his first estate in paradise. Whosoever has a hard thought of God, disowns His Deity; and it is thus with many a sinner now. But we shall have no hard thoughts of Him when we "shall see Him as He is." He shall be our God, our very own; and it shall be in this respect, as it is with men on earth, we shall love what belongs to*

ourselves. Let it be, therefore, that God is not in one sense the God of the sinner. He is, and shall be, of His people; the place which He does not occupy in the hearts of the one, He shall in the hearts of the other. Every thought which the saints have shall confirm Him in the high position which He holds. And how could it be otherwise? When we have inherited "all things," shall we not see the fruits of His beneficence all around? "God" shall be, as it were, written upon all; and because "God" is written upon all, therefore all shall be for man; for man shall then be in the possession of all things which belong to God. And shall not this supremacy of the Deity be delightful for us to own? Then also shall we understand the dispensations which perplex us now so much; we shall no longer wonder at the short triumph which the ungodly had for a season, at the momentary gloom which for a while seemed to eclipse the Christian's sun; all these shall appear well connected parts of one great plan, which was to issue, as now indeed it shall be seen to have done, in the glory of God, and the happiness of the saints. But to see and to understand are not enough to satisfy. Far more than these is conveyed in the promise that the Most High will be our God—the saints shall possess and enjoy the liberality of His heart: there shall be positive ownership exercised by the redeemed; they shall make all these things their own. And keeping in mind the point on which we are now immediately engaged—namely, that God on His part will restore man to his high original, and indeed to something more, we might remind you again that such as "overcome" shall dwell in His very presence for ever. But what more, it might be asked, is contained in the promise, that "the Lord will be our God"? We answer, all those especial developments of the Deity which God has withdrawn from us because of our sin, He will then openly make; and amongst these we might notice this, that He will display His omnipotence in us. Let us think what that power can do. Can it not make us noble, and rich, and perfect, and exalt us beyond the ordinary advancement of man? Undoubtedly it can. And as God will not have any around Him who are not fitted for His court, we may reasonably expect that all this shall be done for us. The Master is noble, and the servant shall be as his Master; he shall be free from the taint of everything that defaces or defiles. Then there shall be no more predisposition to sin, no more contraction of heart, no more sordidness of thought, nothing that is unworthy of God Himself. And our attainment of this will be a display of Divine omnipotence; nothing less than that could accomplish anything with such intractable hearts as ours. But nothing shall be impossible with God.

II. WE TURN NOW TO THAT WHICH IS SAID CONCERNING OURSELVES. One blessing, then, to which we may look forward in the promise that "we shall be His sons," is this, that the unfilial feeling of terror shall be done away. Let the peace of sonship here be an earnest of how sweet the communion of sonship shall be hereafter. And let us not forget, that not only shall all un-son like feelings of terror pass from the bosom of the saints, but that filial delight shall return, delight keener, sweeter, than that which Adam had in paradise. "He shall be My son!" Does not this speak volumes of what we shall feel in heaven? With whom were we so happy when we were in the state which approaches the nearest to innocence? To whom did we cling the most? In whose smile did we bask with the greatest joy? Is not a parent's figure almost the only one which we can see in the long perspective of the past? From this we can learn what Adam felt in Eden, what we shall feel in heaven. This long lost feeling shall return, our sonship shall act, we shall see that there is none equal to our Father, that from Him everything flows, in Him all blessing centres, that He is All in All. And one great element of our blessing shall be this; the consciousness of connection with Him shall come back to us again. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) But the fearful and unbelieving . . . shall have their part in the lake.—*Who are "the fearful"?*—"The cowards" would express the sense more accurately, at least in modern English. Those condemned are those who are afraid to do their duty, not those who do it, though timidly and in spite of the fears of nature: still less those who do it "with fear and trembling" in St. Paul's sense. (*W. H. Simcox, M.A.*) *The cowards:*—We learn from the context where they failed. 1. The irreligious or unbelieving found that a religious life required hardness, restraint, restrictions; whereas it was easier for them to float with the tide of inclination than against it. 2. The dishonest man found it easier to be dishonest than honest: his gains were quicker; he had not to wait and struggle with poverty as the honest man had. 3. The liar had not the courage to tell the truth and face the consequences; but shirked it. 4. The sensualist found it easier

and pleasanter to live a life of unrestrained self-indulgence, than to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection, by reining in his unruly appetites. These are the lost, moral wrecks, the cowards in life's hard battle, who had not the courage to do right. For these there is no promise—they had no thirst after God—their lot, or portion, is the second death. Whatever this may mean more, it is here placed in direct contrast, and as the opposite to the promise made to the conquerors. They are within, these are without. They are the sons of God, these are dogs. They inherit heaven, these drop into the abyss. They are fit company for God and the holy inhabitants of the heavenly city, these for that of devils. (*Proctor's Gems of Thought.*) *The final doom of impenitent sinners:—I. THE PERSONS.*

They are, in short, all kinds of sinners, unless they timely repent and instantly forsake their sins. 1. Of these we have a long catalogue in the text, beginning with the "fearful," who place their fear on a wrong object, and dare not venture to run any hazard for the sake of religion and a good conscience. These lead the van in this long list of sinners, as being the largest in number, and of all others the most egregious and insolent offenders. For no manner of good can be done by persons of so mean a character, who are left destitute of manly courage and rational conduct, and have quite perverted the order of things by estimating the loss of wealth and grandeur to be the only formidable accidents, and the loss of innocence and integrity readily to be dispensed with in hopes of gaining them. Religion, but above all our strict and pure religion, requires that we undergo cheerfully the greatest temporal losses in the service of our Lord and Master, to whom we have vowed dutiful allegiance and persevering obedience. Now, this criminal fear we are speaking of makes us desert and prove traitors upon the least intimation of approaching ill. The most valiant and courageous men are those who, fearing God above all, dare run any hazards in order to serve Him. 2. The "unbelieving" come next to be considered. By these undoubtedly are meant—(1) Such as did not yield a full assent to the truths revealed in the gospel. (2) Such as neglected to live according to that belief. 3. The "abominable." By the abominable we are to understand those polluted wretches who have given up their bodies to the commission of the foulest and most unnatural lusts. 4. "Murderers." He is one that has no regard to the image of God stamped upon our nature, no concern for the welfare of his neighbour and brother. 5. "Whoremongers." Their guilt, I suppose, is legible enough in that most awful threatening (Heb. xiii. 4). Temperance, soberness, and chastity are the most sweetly-becoming ornaments of the Christian life; intemperance, sensuality, and incontinence, the lasting blemishes and utmost scandal of it (Jude, ver. 13). 6. The "sorcerers." They are such as deal by magic and unlawful arts with the devil. 7. "Idolaters." 8. "All liars" it seems must come in for their share among the rest. All that upon any pretence or occasion willingly and deliberately offend against the truth, or, in other words, such as speak not the truth from their hearts. II. *THEIR PUNISHMENT.* "Fire and brimstone." 1. It contains our being deprived of the beatific vision, and of all that is good. 2. Our being tortured with the miseries of hell, and all that is evil. (*R. Warren, D.D.*) *The doom of the righteous and the wicked:—I.*

The first prejudice which we intend to attack is this: A life spent in ease and idleness is not incompatible with salvation, if it be free from great crimes. Against this we oppose this part of our text, "He that overcometh shall inherit." In order to inherit, we must overcome. Here vigilance, action, and motion are supposed. II. The second prejudice is this: A just God will not impute to His creatures sins of infirmity and constitution, though His creatures shall be subject to them during the whole course of their lives. Against this we oppose these words of the apostle, "The fearful and whoremongers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." III. The third prejudice is this: Speculative errors cannot be attended with any fatal consequences, provided we live uprightly, as it is called, and discharge our social duties. Against this we oppose this word, the "unbelieving." The unbelieving are put into the class of the miserable. IV. The fourth prejudice is this: Religions are indifferent. The mercy of God extends to those who live in the most erroneous communions. Against this we oppose the word "idolaters." Idolaters are considered among the most criminal of mankind. V. The last prejudice is this: None but the vulgar ought to be afraid of committing certain crimes. Kings will be judged by a particular law: the greatness of the motive that inclined them to manage some affairs of state will plead their excuse, and secure them from Divine vengeance. Against this we oppose these words, "abominable," "sorcerers," and "all liars," which three words include almost all those abominations which are

called illustrious crimes. (*J. Saurin.*) *The character and condition of the lost:—*

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE LOST. There is but one way to heaven, but there are many ways to hell. It is true that "all, like sheep, have gone astray," but "every one has turned to his own way." There are "the fearful" who have followed the way of cowardice. There are "the unbelieving" or "the faithless" who could not take God at His word. There are "the abominable" or "the abominated," who through association with wickedness and sin are defiled in mind and conscience. Unbelief and wrong-doing are more nearly connected together than many people think. There are "murderers" also, not merely those who have imbrued their hands in the blood of their fellow-men, but those also whose hearts have been dead to the voice of pity and love, who have shut up their bowels of compassion from the poor and needy. The "fornicators" are there also, those sinners against the laws of moral purity which teach us to keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. "Sorcerers" are there likewise, who have used curious arts and familiar spirits, intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind. Following Satan's deceit, they find at last their lot with him, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "Idolaters," too, are there, who have followed the example of King Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 24). There are idols of the heart as well as idols of the hand. "All liars," also, are there. The word literally is "lies," and it includes all forms of deceit, hypocrisy, fraud, "whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie," counterfeits and shams, self-deceit, tongue-craft, the lying life. The phrase, indeed, may be intended not so much to indicate a distinct class of sins and sinners as to stamp the falseness of the seven kinds of iniquity already enumerated. The catalogue is like that of the works of the flesh named in Gal. v. 19-21, and it sets forth the tale of man's disobedience to the whole law of God. Moreover, we may trace in this succession of sins a gradation of wickedness. Men shrink from the trouble and effort of a godly life, and take refuge in unbelief. This brings them into willing association with sin, and those who sin against their brethren become sinners against their own souls, and intruders into the secret counsels of the Most High. They have practically denied the God that is above, and the result is the idolatry of the creature; and thus (Rom. i. 25).

II. THE CONDITION OF THE LOST. A similar description of the lot of the wicked is that given by St. Paul (2 Thess. i. 7-9). 1. First, the loss which the finally impenitent will undergo will be the loss of God indicated in that awful phrase, "the second death." This language is evidently intended to distinguish this state from another which may be called "the first death." But what is the first death? Not, it would seem, the separation of body and spirit in natural death. The context tells us that there shall be no more death in this sense (ver. 4); and the period to which our text refers is subsequent to the resurrection of the body. Rather does the term, "the second death," lead us to think of the first death as the present spiritual state of those who are not renewed by the Holy Spirit. Such are, to use St. Paul's language, "dead in trespasses and sins," &c. (Eph. ii. 1, 2, and iv. 18). Separation from God, which sinners chose on earth, they find in hell, and what they thought so desirous here they find, with their quickened sensibilities, to be their sorrow there. Cut off from their former opportunities of sin and facilities for ignoring spiritual things, they are face to face with their real position, and they find in it the bitterness of death. The dream of vanity and folly and sin, from which no word or judgment could rouse them here, has vanished, and they wake up now to shame and everlasting contempt. 2. For this second death is an actual judgment as well as a woeful loss. The golden sceptre of grace shall be exchanged there for the iron rod of discipline. (*Jas. Silvester, M.A.*)

Vers. 9-14. **I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.—The glorious bride:—**I. WHO AND WHAT SHE WAS BEFORE SHE BECAME THE BRIDE. She had no high descent to boast of. Her lineage was not royal, but low and mean. Without goodness, without beauty; without personal or family recommendation; unloving and unlovable; an alien, a captive, a rebel. Such were you once, O saint; such are you still, O sinner! II. HOW AND WHY SHE WAS FIXED UPON. Of the "how" and the "why" of this sovereign purpose, what can we say but this, that in one so unlovable and worthless it found opportunity and scope for the outflow and display of free love, such as could be found in no other? It was the Father's free choice, and the Son's free choice, that made her what she is now, the bride, and what she is through eternity to be, "the Lamb's wife." III. HOW SHE WAS OBTAINED. She is a captive, and must be set free. This the Bride-

groom undertakes to do; for her sake becoming a captive. She is a criminal, under wrath, and must be delivered from condemnation and death. This also the Bridegroom undertakes; for her sake submitting to condemnation and death, that so her pardon may be secured, her fetters broken, and life made hers for ever. IV. How SHE WAS BETROTHED. The Bridegroom Himself came down in lowly guise to woo and win her for Himself. But now He is carrying on His suit in absence, through the intervention of others, as Isaac's proposals to Rebekah were carried on through the faithful Eliezer of Damascus. We tell of our Isaac's noble lineage, His riches, His honours, His worth. We tell of all that He has done to win your love, and set before you the glory of His person, that you may see how worthy He is of all this love; how blessed, how honourable it would be for you to be the bride of such a Bridegroom; and we say, "Wilt thou go with the Man?" V. How SHE IS PREPARED AND ADORNED. It is through the Holy Spirit that this is carried out. This Spirit having overcome her unwillingness, and persuaded her to consent to the glorious betrothment, immediately commences His work of preparation. He strips her of her rags, and puts on royal apparel. He cleanses her from her filthiness, and makes her whiter than snow. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The bridal city*:—Not heaven itself, but "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." Not the palace-home, but the bride herself, the Church of the firstborn made perfect, presented under the gorgeous imagery of a magnificent temple-city—an ideal of perfect glory and beauty, safety and fitness—this is the true subject described by John. "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 1. Often, in the old days, John had heard from his Master teaching, parabolic and otherwise, which suggested the thought that His saved people should, in their corporate capacity, constitute His bride. This, in turn, would recall to the reverent student of the Old Testament all the bridal imagery of the prophecies—notably of Isaiah and Jeremiah—imagery so curiously and suggestively interlaced with the whole circle of paradise, city, and temple symbolism. Out of all this material, so familiar to him, John had no difficulty in constructing a distinct picture of the New Jerusalem, the virgin daughter of Zion, married as a bride to her Lord. Already Ezekiel, with extraordinary elaboration of detail, had portrayed this ideal bridal-city, and not a few of Ezekiel's details are transferred, with but little change, to this New Testament picture. 2. It requires no stretch of fancy to believe that John, during his residence in Ephesus, had frequently read the famous circular-letter which Paul sent, first to Ephesus. And it is a significant fact, that in the Epistle to the Ephesians we have precisely the same combination of temple-city and bride which meets us in this chapter. It is a highly figurative picture of a perfected Christ—ideal at present, but an ideal one day to be realised. The practical use to which the vision may legitimately be turned is twofold. 1. It is an inspiration of hope. You see what is the hope of your calling. To this ye are to come. This is the final destiny of the saints. 2. It is also—and this I believe to be its main purpose—a "pattern in the Mount." One of the great peculiarities of the Church of Jesus Christ is this, that its golden age does not lie in the past, but in the future. And when we desire an example—a pattern up to and after which we may work—we find it in the revealed future; and that is the only justification of the revelation of the future—to supply us with a "mark for the prize of our high calling." I. "HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD." The first thing noted is the radiant beauty of the bride—a beauty which consists in the striking resemblance between her and her Lord. The Church, in her ideal condition, has been so long with her Lord, coming up through the wilderness, that she has caught the beauty of His face and form, and is a "partaker of the Divine nature," and falls only a little way short of "the measure of the stature of His fulness." This is her golden wedding-day—the jubilee of her redemption. We may read earlier in the Book how she was caught up into heaven out of the wilderness, and now she is "coming down from God out of heaven," arrayed in garments white and glistening, "having the glory of God." The first impression often produced on Church review days—at conferences, and congresses, and unions—is not altogether so noble as this. What an influential Church! So many hundred thousand members! What perfect organisation! What resources of wealth and culture! What buildings! But in the great review-day—the day of "the marriage of the Lamb"—the first thought will be this, "having the glory of God." This is the ideal at which we are to aim. If you desire to form a distinct idea of the glory of God, read the descriptions of God's glory as seen in ancient times by Moses or Isaiah; as revealed in God's

name, or in ancient song; as shining in the face of Jesus Christ; as manifested in His life and works; as revealed in words fallen from His lips, or written by St. Paul, or pictured in the visions of this Book. Think of the purity, the holiness, and righteousness, of the mercy and truth, of the faithfulness and lovingkindness, of our God and Father! This is "the image of God" in which we are to be renewed. This is to be "the mark for the prize." II. "HAVING A WALL GREAT AND HIGH." Walls, in ancient times, were for three purposes: 1. Defining. The position of the Church in relation to the world must be clearly defined. Everywhere throughout the Bible this is taught. "Having a wall great and high,"—a clearly defined creed, resting on foundations of precious stones, bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; an equally clearly defined discipline; a distinct organisation of fellowship—"A wall," built of good stones—well bounded—"great and high." Not that the Church is to be narrow, little, without elbow-room, stifled, "cribbed, cabined, or confined." The Holy City which John saw—the ideal Church—was vast beyond our poor power to conceive—twelve thousand stadii—all the cities of the earth are mere villages in comparison. By the same measurement, London would be but a small and straightened dwelling-place. 2. Walls were for purposes of enclosure. We are to be an enclosed people. Not nomadic—mere wilderness wanderers, heedlessly roaming hither and thither, like unclean spirits, "walking through waterless places, seeking rest and finding none"; but a people with a home, "a city of habitation," and, therefore, with a work, living for a definite purpose, sharing a common life, helping one another, "bearing one another's burdens." 3. Walls were for defence. If they prevent lawless wandering, they also prevent lawless incursions. The success of Christian work depends very much on the Churches' power to protect. And a Church cannot protect unless it has this "wall" of sound doctrine and faithful discipline, and clearly defined fellowship—"a wall great and high." One feature of the Bride's resemblance to her Lord—one true sense in which she may have "the glory of God"—is this, that she is able, not only to save, but also to keep. Like her Lord, she may say, "Of all whom Thou hast given me I have lost none, save the son of perdition." "I have lost none." A Church cannot say that, if she carelessly allows any part of her protecting walls to be mere mud-heaps, "daubed with untempered mortar." And do not lose sight of the adornment—"with all manner of precious stones." Do not frighten the people away from the Church by dull, heavy, rough, ugly buildings. You are not rearing a prison, or a criminal lunatic asylum; but a temple, a palace, a bridal city. III. HAVING TWELVE GATES. The Church is not to be imprisoned, nor is it to imprison its members, or its influence, its light, its melody. But, at all times, and on all sides, it is to have perfect power to "go through the gates." (*N. Curnock.*) *A sight of the bride*:—I. Now you know, idle curiosity prompts a great many persons to go and see great sights; and frequently, when persons have been into the metropolis from distant parts of the country, the neighbours ask when they return, "Did you see such a sight?" Well, what are they after all? "the things which are seen are temporal"; "the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing" them. But when the soul gets a sight of Christ, he never wants to turn from it. I advise you, as the angel did John, to "come hither" along with me to this "great and high mountain," that we may get this lovely and enamouring sight. The advice, you see, is that of an aspirant—to get away from the position which he was occupying—the low ground of earthly attractions; one of the most important points in our whole Christianity, to get away from things on earth, to rise, and aspire, and soar on high. Moreover, this advice calls for the obedience of faith—obedience to the Divine call. This messenger was one of God's messengers, an angel sent with a direct errand to John, to tell him to "come hither." Now, wherever this obedience is yielded, there is a mighty deliverance, because we are by nature so entangled with the things of the world, so entangled with self-righteousness, so entangled by sin and Satan, that it requires a mighty deliverance to get us away, to draw us from, and bring us out of, our love and practice of the things that are only earthly. But I hasten to remark, that decision is all-important in this act of obedience to the Divine call. There must be no hesitating about the matter. There must be no looking back, with a lingering, longing look, upon Sodom. "Get thee out hence." When Jehovah calls by His messenger, and says, "Come hither," delay is dangerous, decision is important. And then this coming up hither, this aspiring after heavenly things, must be devotional. It is that which is created by the power of the Holy Ghost in the soul, and amounts to nothing less

than the aspiring of all the graces in lively exercise. Faith will aspire, and hope will aspire, and love will aspire, and all the graces of the spirit must aspire, as moved, supplied, acted upon, and constrained by the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost. Now glance at this aspiring soul, and see his progress. He is rising and rising, higher and higher every hour; just as you see the skylark ascending from its nest where it had been grovelling; when it first warbles, it seems but a little above your head, but it sings and mounts, and sings and mounts, till it is almost out of sight. Once more observe, that as we rise in knowledge, we shall rise also in enjoyment, we shall rise in love to Him. Then mark, we shall rise in anticipation. "Come hither" to the top of this great and high mountain, and anticipate the bliss that is to be revealed, that glory that is about to open to view. II. Now upon this position we may expect THE SIGHT WHICH FOLLOWS, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." What a sight! Now I want to show you the bride, because there are a great many persons who presume to assume the name to whom it does not belong. 1. And, in the first place, you may know her by her wedding dress. What do you think it is? Why, the imputed righteousness of her loving Lord. And therefore she sings as Isaiah taught the Church to sing in olden time—"My soul shall rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in my God, for He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness and clothed me with the garments of salvation, as a bride adorneth herself for her husband." 2. Moreover, "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," in her indissoluble union. The husband that is really married has not only a bride, but a wife. Now, before time began, before the world was formed, before angels fell, before sin existed, Jesus and His bride were betrothed in love, and engaged in eternal union. Moreover, this indissoluble union is effected by Him in the fulness of time. I confess I like to talk about this courtship, and this marriage too. 3. Well, let us go on a step further—it is enjoyed. This union which is indissoluble between Christ and His Church, is enjoyed in communion, enjoyed in fellowship, enjoyed in association, enjoyed in every possible expression of affection, enjoyed in mutual help. There are pangs frequently felt in the most affectionate unions upon earth at the idea of separation; but "I am persuaded," says St. Paul, that in this union there can be no separation; "for neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Is not she a happy bride, then? (*J. Irons.*) *The Holy City, the Bride of the Lamb*:—Our great work is to build the city of God upon the earth, and this can be done only through the organised life of the world. We must not be content to go one way, and to allow what we call secular institutions to go another way. We are the salt of the earth. We, through the Spirit of God, are the makers of the new city, and God has given us the old city as the material out of which we are to make the new. It is ours to transform the earthly city so that it shall be glorified into the heavenly. 1. In the first place, it is clear that the ideal city in this character of "Bride" is in living union with God. So that the figure of the "Bride" as conceived in the New Testament is one of loving dependence and living unity. She finds her joy, her fulness, her splendour, her very life, in Him for whom she is adorned. She is a very part of His life, and finds her true glory in losing herself in Him. Such is the relation to God of that city that would realise God's ideal. This is precisely what is implied in the picture before us—namely, that all the vast secular organisations of society must find their ideal in being the "Bride of the Lamb." What is thought to be the peculiar characteristic of a number of people that have certain religious and spiritual affinities must come to be recognised as the best thing for all the busy world, and as the normal attitude of the city or State that would attain true and abiding prosperity. We cannot keep the higher ideal in its strength by our religious combinations and assemblies unless we insist upon its maintenance in and for the busy hum of life. The worshipping attitude of the sanctuary is also the ideal attitude for the mart, the exchange, the council chamber, and the senate. But let the Church realise that it is not the ideal of a select coterie, however worthy and however divinely elected, but the ideal that must sweep the world, and sit upon the throne of every State, an ideal that is as good for the market-place as for the sanctuary. Then it will have new power and influence, and our Churches will rise to higher levels of worship and consecration. The old Puritans realised this when they knelt together for prayer in the British House of Commons. They believed that the grandest thing a State could do was to worship God, provided it were done in spirit

and in truth, and not by the mockery of mechanical enactments. The city that will not be the Bride of the Lamb shall perish. 2. This condition of living union with God involves the development of holy affinities with God. The ideal city must construct its life and frame its ends according to the pattern on the Mount. If it is to be in living union with God, it must live according to the divinest motives and ideals. The Bride must be adorned for her Husband in the jewels that He loves. Many tell us that the heavenly and spiritual ideas that we place before them are not necessary or suited for the great life and problems of the city. They say that the city has to do with earth, not with heaven; that its development and prosperity and elevation depend upon philanthropies and social revolutions and political changes. For this worship is not necessary, thoughts and hopes of heaven are hampering, and ideas of spiritual renewal, holiness, and Divine peace are altogether Utopian. They tell the Church, in effect, that its ideas are altogether out of place in this world of states and cities. And some good men have unfortunately fallen victims to this modern falsehood. They have forsaken the Christian ideal, and accepted the ideal of the social revolutionist and the secular politician. What they think the gospel cannot do they hope to do by some loud-sounding Ism, and proclaim this as the world's salvation, rather than the Divine ideals of Jesus Christ. The scornful wisdom of the world will again, as in times past, be brought to confusion. The present glorification of material things and material ends and methods will end in failure. The ideal city will be the Bride of the Lamb. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

The bride.—I. COME HITHER AND SEE THE BRIDE AS THOU HAST NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE. 1. In the enjoyment of nearer communion. 2. Participating in the highest honours. 3. Possessing enlarged knowledge. 4. Entirely absorbed in contemplation of Him. II. COME HITHER AND SEE THE BRIDE WHERE SHE NEVER WAS BEFORE. 1. Beyond the tempter's power. 2. Beyond the rags of poverty and the experience of famine. 3. Far removed from the darts of the enemy. 4. Away from the vineyard. Toil a thing of the past. The curse revoked. III. COME HITHER, AND SEE THE BRIDE AS SHE HERSELF NEVER EXPECTED TO BE. IV. COME HITHER, AND SEE HER AS SHE WAS DECREED TO BE. V. COME HITHER, AND SEE HER AS SHE SHALL FOR EVER REMAIN. 1. Her Husband has paid her debts. 2. Her Husband is unchangeable. 3. No fear of divorce. 4. No fear of estrangement on her part. 5. No death. VI. COME HITHER AND SEE HER AS SHE SHOULD NOW AIM TO BE. (*R. A. Griffin.*)

That great city, the holy Jerusalem.—*The new Jerusalem*.—One of the most remarkable paradoxes of the Church of our times is its abhorrence of materiality in connection with the kingdom of Christ and the eternal future, whilst practically up to its ears in materialism and earthiness. No wonder that professed believers of our day are anxious to put off getting into the heaven they believe in as long as the doctor's skill can keep them out of it, and finally agree to go only as a last despairing resort. It has no substance, no reality, for the soul to take hold on. It is nothing but a world of shadows, of mist, of dim visions of blessedness, with which it is impossible for a being who is not mere spirit, and never will be mere spirit, who knows only to live in a body, and shall live for ever in a body, to feel any fellowship or sympathy. But such are not the ideas of our futurity which the Bible holds out to our faith and hope. Did men but learn to know the difference between a paradise of sense and a paradise of sensuality, the truth of God would not suffer in men's hands as it does, and their souls would not suffer as they do for something solid to anchor to amid the anxious perturbations of life and death. Did men but rid themselves of the old heresy that matter means sin, and learn to know and feel that there was a material universe before sin was, and that a material universe will live on when sin shall have been clean washed away from the entire face of it, they would be in better position both to understand and to enjoy the fore-announcements of the futurity of the saints which God has given for their consolation amid these earthly vicissitudes and falsities. The New Jerusalem, which we now come to consider, is in the line of these ideas. It stands in antithesis to the final Babylon. That a real city as well as a perfected moral system is here to be understood, I see not how we can otherwise conclude. All the elements of a city are indicated. It has specific dimensions. It has foundations, walls, gates, and streets. It has guards outside and inhabitants within, both distinct from what characterises it as a real construction. Among the highest promises to the saints of all ages was the promise of a special place and economy answering to a heavenly city, and which is continually referred to as an enduring and God-built city. I. ITS DERIVATION. John sees it "coming down out of heaven from God." It is of celestial origin. It is the direct product of Almighty

power and wisdom. He who made the worlds is the Maker of this illustrious city. No mortal hand is ever employed upon its construction. The saints are all God's workmanship. They are all begotten of His Spirit, and shaped and fashioned into living stones from the dark quarries of a fallen world, and transfigured from glory to glory by the gracious operations of His hand. They reach their heavenly character and places through His own direct agency and influence. And He who makes, prepares, and places them, makes, prepares, and places their sublime habitation also. II. ITS LOCATION. This is not specifically told, but the record is not without some hints. John sees it coming down out of heaven. The idea is that it comes close to the earth, and is intended to have a near relation to the earth; but it is nowhere said that it ever alights on the earth, or ever becomes part of its material fabric. Though coming into the vicinity of the earth, it is always spoken of as the "Jerusalem which is above" (Gal. iv. 26). III. ITS SPLENDOUR. Here the specifications are numerous and transcendent, as we would expect in a city erected and ornamented by Jehovah, and coming forth direct from the heavens. Everything built by God's direction is the very best and most splendid of its kind. And this city has, and is invested with, the glory, light, brightness, and radiating splendour of God. IV. ITS AMPLITUDE. There is no stint or meanness in God's creations. When He set Himself to the making of worlds, He filled up an immeasurable space with them. When He created angels He added myriads on myriads, and orders on orders, till all earthly arithmetic is lost in the counting of them. When He started the human race it was on a career of multiplication to which we can set no limit. When He began the glorious work of redemption, and commenced the taking out and fashioning of a people to become the companions of His only begotten Son and co-regents with their Redeemer, these pictures of the final outcome tell of great multitudinous hosts, in numbers like the sands of the seashore. And the city He builds for them is of corresponding dimensions. Amplitude—amplitude of numbers, as well as glorious accommodations—is unmistakably signified, in whatever way we contemplate the astonishing picture. V. ITS SYSTEM OF ILLUMINATION. What is a city without light! The glory of God's brightness envelopes it like an unclouded halo, permeates it, and radiates through it and from it so that there is not a dark or obscure place about it. VI. ITS LACK OF A TEMPLE. "A temple," says the seer, "I saw not in it." What a vacuum it would create in every earthly city if its temples were taken away! What would ancient Jerusalem have been without its temple? But it is no privation to the New Jerusalem that there is no temple in it. Nay, it is one of its sublimest peculiarities. Deity will then have come forth from behind all veils, all mediating sacraments, all previous barriers and hidings because of the infirmities of the flesh or the weaknesses of undeveloped spirituality. Himself will be the temple thereof. The glorious worshippers there hold direct communion with His manifested glory, which encompasses them and all their city alike. As consecrated high priests they will then have come into the holiest of all, into the very cloud of God's overshadowing glory, which is at once their covering, their temple, their God. VII. ITS RELATION TO THE WORLD AT LARGE. Of old, the song of the Psalmist was: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King" (Psa. xlviii. 2). In every land into which the Jewish people wandered, there was a glad thrill upon their souls when they remembered Jerusalem. We cannot look back upon those times, even now, without a degree of fascination which draws like a magnet upon every feeling of the heart. And what was then realised on a small and feeble scale, in the case of one people, is to be the universal experience with regard to this blessed city. It is to be the centre and illuminator of the world. VIII. ITS SUPREME HOLINESS. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The city of God*:—I believe that it was a purpose of God in making the world that it should have in it great cities. Wisdom, in the beginning of God's ways, "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and her delights were with the sons of men." A peopled earth—a city-covered earth—was, I have no doubt, from the beginning part of what God meant should be. Ages of great cities are of His appointment. But sin has spoiled all. Here's the mischief. The only thing to be complained of in London, or any other city, is sin. Now, the thing that sin has spoiled here—the life of great cities—is to be perfectly shown in another world. There is "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." God is not ashamed to be called the God of His saints, for "He hath prepared for them a city." I. THE CITY—WHAT IT IS. Talk of great London! Rome! Nineveh! Babylon!—the vision of St. John conveys the idea of something much more vast

and beautiful in the last home of the saints. City and country, street and garden, Jerusalem and Eden, are mixed in the picture here, to show, I suppose, that heaven will have in it all that is fairest in nature with all that is richest in civilisation. The city is built of "precious stones"—all manner of precious stones piled together. Precious stones are in themselves more astonishing than any form, however curious and beautiful, into which they can be carved. In their nature they are images of heavenly things. Just think: no objects last so long as precious stones: they are the oldest and the strongest things in nature. No objects are so pure and clear as precious stones. The crystal is purer than the water, when the water is said to be like crystal. No objects are so free from corruption and decay, so utterly beyond the reach of inward stain. And no objects are at once so richly dyed, so rainbow-like in colour, and yet so well seen through, so ready to get and to give light. Are they not striking images of the things of heaven? The lasting nature of heaven! the bright clearness of heaven! the impossibility of staining heaven! the truth, the faithfulness, the love, the justice that dwell and reign in the city of heaven! The life lost by Adam's sin is brought back, and perfected and made to last by Christ's obedience. Redemption more than repairs the fall; the Lamb has slain the serpent; simplicity has got the better of subtlety; the patience, self-denial, and sacrifice of the atoning Mediator have destroyed the mischief of the tempter's pride, selfishness and cruelty; for a heaven better than Eden is opened to men driven from Eden. In the New Jerusalem there are none of the drawbacks and evils of an earthly condition. Especially we are taught that the city is "holy." The tabernacle and the temple were patterns of things in the heavens. Now, in every possible way they showed the quality of holiness. In the other world, as much as in this, physical purity as well as moral, moral purity as well as physical, are indispensably needful. A clean heart in a clean house—that is wanted for comfort in this world and in that. Clean hands, pure worship, and a soul full of health and joy—that was the order of things in Jerusalem; so it is in the Christian Church, and will be in heaven. Heaven is pure: it must be so; the necessity is grounded on the deepest reasons. It follows, from its being the habitation of God; of God the holy;—whose eyes are called the eyes of His holiness; whose arm is called His holy arm; whose name is a holy name: who swears by His holiness; who cannot look upon sin; whom to rob of His moral perfection, in our thoughts, is to insult even more than by the denial of His being. It follows, from the perfection of the saints. Any defilement in them would destroy their perfection. Any defilement in their companions would endanger their perfection. It follows, from its being a world of bliss. Sin would spoil the bliss. The consciousness of it would unmake heaven. (*John Stoughton.*)

Heaven:—This figure of heaven suggests—I. ITS RELATION TO GOD'S EMPIRE. What the Metropolis is to a country, heaven is to the universe. 1. The central influence of the kingdom. 2. The dwelling-place of its chiefest and strongest. 3. The residence of its sovereign. II. ITS MARVELLOUS CONSTRUCTION. 1. Heaven is a vast city—a city, not a mere hamlet for a handful of the elect. 2. Heaven is a secure city. Its walls, its gates, &c. "Nothing can hurt or destroy." 3. Heaven is a magnificent city. Nothing impoverished, no by-ways of shame, no lurking places of misery; its very streets are of gold. III. ITS FAMOUS POPULATION. The population is—1. Immense in number; "a great multitude," &c. 2. Honourable in occupation. Jerusalem a city of priests; Athens, of sages; Rome, of soldiers; London, of shopkeepers: heaven, of saints, who serve God day and night. 3. Holy in character. This the glory of the population; they are robed in white. Their moral lustre is their beauty. (*Homilist.*) *The holy city*:—This city is not earthly, but heavenly, and is among the heavenly things said by the apostle to be purified by the "better sacrifices" (Heb. ix. 23). Why did such a city need "purifying"? Not because unclean, but because sinners were to dwell in it; and they would have defiled it, had it not been for the great sacrifice. For the blood does two things—it makes the unclean clean, and it keeps the clean from being defiled. 1. It is a great city. There has been no city like it. It is the city, the one city, the great metropolis of the mighty universe. 2. It is a well-built city. Its builder and maker is God. Its foundations are eternal; its walls are jasper; its gates pearls; its streets paved with gold. It is "compactly built together," lying four-square, and perfect in all its parts, without a break or flaw, or weakness or deformity. 3. It is a well-lighted city. Something brighter than sun and moon is given to fill its heaven. The glory of God lightens it; the Lamb is its "light" or "lamp," so that it needs no candle, no sunlight. 4. It is a well-watered city. A

pure river of the water of life flows through its streets, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb. What must its waters be! What must be the rivers of pleasure there! 5. It is a well-provisioned city. The tree of life is there, with its twelve variety of fruits and its health-giving leaves. It has more than Eden had. It is paradise restored; paradise and Jerusalem in one; Jerusalem in paradise, and paradise in Jerusalem. 6. It is a well-guarded city. Not only has it gates, and walls, and towers, which no enemy could scale or force; but at the gates are twelve angels keeping perpetual watch. 7. It is a well-governed city. No misrule is there, no disorder, no lawlessness, no rebellion. 8. It is a well-peopled city. It has gathered within its walls all generations of the redeemed. Its population is as the sands or the stars; the multitude that no man can number; the millions of the risen and glorified. 9. It is a holy city. Nothing that defileth shall enter; no spot or speck or shadow of evil. All is perfection there, Divine perfection. 10. It is a glorious city. The glory that fills it and encircles it is the glory of God. Everything resplendent is there. It shines like the sun. 11. It is a blessed city. It is truly "the joyous city." It is the throne of the blessed One, and all in it is like Him. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Twelve gates.—*The manifold Christ*:—Three gates on each side of the celestial quadrangle. So much as to the accessibility of the heavenly city. Christ is Himself gateway impersonated, what Scripture calls "open door." Three gates in each wall. Christ is not only one gate; He is all the gates, and His multiplicity matches our diversity. So that each man to be saved will be saved by his own particular Christ, and enter the kingdom through his own special private portal. We believe in the same Christ, and yet we have not the same belief in Christ—like two men standing on the opposite side of a hill, who have a view of the same hill, but not the same view of the hill. We are in that respect like different kinds of flowers growing out in the sunshine; one flower when it is touched by white light will extract from the white light one particular tint, another flower will extract another particular tint from the same white light. So while we all in a way believe in Christ we each believe in our own way, and He is not the same to any two of us. This leads on to say that Christ as you apprehend Him—not as I apprehend Him, not as your neighbour apprehends Him, but Christ as you apprehend Him—is your open door. Doubtless, as we come to know Him better and to enter more deeply into the intimacies of His character and spirit, our conceptions of Him will have more and more in common, and we shall draw nearer and nearer to each other in our views and experience of Him. Three gates on a side. "The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon Him." Christ, in the conception that you already have of Him, is your gate; no hunting necessary in order to find it; no waiting requisite. The Bible would not say, "Choose ye this day" if there were anything to wait for. Such words as "now" and "to-day" would have to be left out if the gate were anywhere but directly in front of you. This Biblical idea of "to-day" just matches this apocalyptic idea of three gates on a side, every man's gate close to him. The object of this is not to encourage the notion that it makes no difference how little idea a man has of Christ. Our only point is that the veriest scintilla of an idea, if made available, is enough to begin with. Supposing in a dark, starless night you become lost in the woods. The glimmer of a distant candle reaches your eye, and you are not lost any longer. There may not be light enough about it to show you where you are, but you are not lost any more because there is light enough about it to give you a direction. Any smallest, feeblest conception you may have of Christ will answer every purpose if only you will treat it in the same way that you would treat what appeared to be the glimmer of a distant candle falling upon your eye by night in the midst of a black forest. Light is a sure guide, because, unlike sound, it goes in straight lines. And wherever and howsoever far out upon the circumference of Christ's character you take your position and begin threading inward any one of its radiating lines, you are moving by a line as straight as a sunbeam toward the heart and centre of the entire matter. When the disciples were bidden by Christ to follow Him, clearly that meant to them at the outset little more than patterning their lives after Him, going where He went, and doing what He did. That was where they first took hold of the matter. Anything like mere imitation seems mostly to disappear from their life in its later manifestations and farther developments; but it was not much but imitation to begin with. They commenced by obeying Him and trying to be like Him. Christ's early instruction to them was in this line. Now, it must needs be said that this obediently doing what God in Christ enjoins upon us, important and indispensable as of course it is, is by no manner of means the best and most

distinctive part of the Christian matter. At the same time there are two things to be said about it that are practical and that are in close line with our present thought. The first is that while studiously doing as Christ bids us is not the best part of the Lord's matter, it is singularly educating, and contributes with wonderful facility to initiate us into the best part of the Lord's matter. Obedience to Christ is only gateway so far as relates to the full meaning of Christ and of Christian life, but it is gateway that portals one of the central avenues conducting directly to meanings that are more essential and complete. The other point is that this matter of taking Christ's commands and doing them is not only gateway, but gateway that opens itself immediately in our face. We have not to search around in order to find it. The door is directly in front of us. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*)

The many gates:—I. THE VARIOUSNESS OF MEN'S MANNER OF APPROACH TO THE HEAVENLY CITY. The "gates" open in all directions, because an almost infinite variety of travellers, and journeying from most dissimilar regions, are to be gathered there. Said our Saviour to His disciples, "Other sheep I have, who are not of this fold." The gospel He proclaimed was not for one nation only, but for the world. And so this New Jerusalem, to which that gospel points the way, must be accessible to men of all languages and lands. But it is not this geographical variousness of approach to the New Jerusalem alone which the fourfold aspect of the heavenly gates suggests to us. There is a moral variousness still greater than any geographical one. The people who gather, are gathered not only out of unlike regions, but out of unlike faiths, ideas, habits, deficiencies. Those must needs be, in many respects, very different pathways of approach, intellectually and morally, which are traversed to the heavenly city by one who comes thither out of African ignorance, out of Oriental mysticism, out of Indian savagery, and out of European refinement. How unlike, after all, are the dwellers who live door to door in a city like this; or sit side by side in this Sabbath sanctuary! What diverse dispositions, inclinations, experiences, characters! And in leading men and women so variously constituted to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Spirit of God conducts them in most diverse ways. Here is one who arrives thither through the throes and agonies of an experience as stormy as that of Luther or of Paul. Here is another whose Christian experience is like that of Fénelon or John. Almost natural it seems for this man, when he heard the words, "Behold the Lamb of God," to turn and follow Him. Here are those on whom in their journey Zionward the sun always seems to smile. Others come, but it is always under a stormy sky. More and more alone as they go forward, heavier and heavier weighted with suffering and with care, they arrive at last, spent and buffeted, like a shipwrecked sailor, smitten by a thousand seas, stripped and exhausted, at the heavenly refuge.

II. THE UNEXPECTEDNESS OF THE ARRIVAL OF MANY THERE. As many of the travellers to the city were on their way thither, they often seemed at least to be journeying in different directions. Their pathways sometimes ran not parallel but crosswise, and even in contrary courses, according as each was led by the Good Spirit which guided him to one or another of the opposite gates. And it would not be strange if, while they thus crossed and traversed one another, doubt should arise, and even controversy, as to the probability of one another's arrival. Sometimes the road insisted on has been the road of a particular church organisation. Sometimes the prescribed pathway has been a particular form of some Christian ordinance. How reassuring, in view of an almost interminable catalogue of controversies like these, to remember the many and opposite-looking gates of the heavenly city! How comforting to know that not one road, but many roads, leads thither! And what a suggestion this affords of the surprises which will await those who finally enter; the unexpectedness to multitudes of the arrival of multitudes besides. (*Leon Walker, D.D.*)

The gates of heaven:—The Cashmere Gate of Delhi, where converged a heroism that makes one's nerves tingle; the Lucknow Gate, still dented and scarred with Sepoy bombardment; the Madeline Gate, with its emblazonry in bronze; the hundred gates of Thebes, the wonder of centuries, all go out of sight before the gates of my text. I. EXAMINE THE ARCHITECTURE OF THOSE GATES. Proprietors of large estates are very apt to have an ornamented gateway. Gates of wood and iron and stone guarded nearly all the old cities. Moslems have inscribed upon their gateways inscriptions from the Koran of the Mohammedan. There have been a great many fine gateways, but Christ sets His hand to the work, and for the upper city swung a gate such as no eye ever gazed on, untouched of inspiration. There is no wood, or stone, or bronze in that gate, but from top to base, and from side to side, it is all of pearl. Not one piece picked up from Ceylon banks, and another

piece from the Persian Gulf, and another from the Island of the Margarete; but one solid pearl picked up from the beach of everlasting light by heavenly hands, and hoisted and swung amid the shouting of angels. The glories of alabaster vase and porphyry pillar fade out before this gateway. Julius Caesar paid a hundred and twenty-five thousand crowns for one pearl. The Government of Portugal boasted of having a pearl larger than a pear. Cleopatra and Philip II. dazzled the world's vision with precious stones. But gather all these together and lift them, and add to them all the wealth of the pearl fisheries and set them in the panel of one door, and it does not equal this magnificent gateway. An Almighty hand hewed this, swung this, polished this. Against this gateway, on one side, dash all the splendours of earthly beauty. Against this gate, on the other side, beat the surges of eternal glory. II. COUNT THE NUMBER OF THOSE GATES. Imperial parks and lordly manors are apt to have one expensive gateway, and the others are ordinary; but look around at these entrances to heaven and count them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Hear it all the earth and all the heavens. Twelve gates. Gate the first: the Moravians come up; they believed in the Lord Jesus; they pass through. Gate the second: the Quakers come up; they have received the inward light; they have trusted in the Lord; they pass through. Gate the third: the Lutherans come up; they had the same grace that made Luther what he was, and they pass through. Gate the fourth: the Baptists pass through. Gate the fifth: the Free-will Baptists pass through. Gate the sixth: the Reformed Church passes through. Gate the seventh: the Congregationalists pass through. Gate the eighth: the Episcopalians pass through. Gate the ninth: the Methodists pass through. Gate the tenth: the Sabbatarians pass through. Gate the eleventh: the Church of the Disciples pass through. Gate the twelfth: the Presbyterians pass through. But there are a great number of other denominations who must come in, and great multitudes who connected themselves with no visible Church, but felt the power of godliness in their heart and showed it in their life. Where is their gate? Will you shut all the remaining host out of the city? No. They may come in at our gate. III. NOTICE THE POINTS OF THE COMPASS TOWARD WHICH THESE GATES LOOK. They are not on one side, or on two sides, or on three sides, but on four sides. What does that mean? Why, it means that all nationalities are included. On the north three gates. That means mercy for Lapland, and Siberia, and Norway, and Sweden. On the south three gates. That means pardon for Hindostan, and Algiers, and Ethiopia. On the east three gates. That means salvation for China, and Japan, and Borneo. On the west three gates. That means redemption for America. It does not make any difference how dark-skinned or how pale-faced men may be, they will find a gate right before them. Hear it! oh, you thin-blooded nations of eternal winter—on the north three gates. Hear it! oh, you bronzed inhabitants panting under equatorial heats—on the south three gates. But I notice when John saw these gates they were open—wide open. They will not always be so. After awhile heaven will have gathered up all its intended population, and the children of God will have come home. And heaven being made up, of course the gates will be shut. IV. THE GATEKEEPERS. There is one angel at each one of those gates. You say that is right. Of course it is. You know that no earthly palace, or castle, or fortress would be safe without a sentry pacing up and down by night and by day; and if there were no defences before heaven, and the doors set wide open with no one to guard them, all the vicious of earth would go up after awhile, and all the abandoned of hell would go up after awhile, and heaven, instead of being a world of light, and joy, and peace, and blessedness, would be a world of darkness and horror. So I am glad to tell you that while these twelve gates stand open to let a great multitude in, there are twelve angels to keep some people out. Robespierre cannot go through there, nor Hildebrand, nor Nero, nor any of the debauched of earth who have not repented of their wickedness. There will be a password at the gate of heaven. Do you know what that password is? Here comes a crowd of souls up to the gate, and they say: "Let me in. Let me in. I was very useful on earth. I endowed colleges, I built churches, and was famous for my charities; and having done so many wonderful things for the world, now I come up to get my reward." A voice from within says: "I never knew you." Another great crowd comes up, and they try to get through. They say: "We were highly honourable on earth, and the world bowed very lowly before us. We were honoured on earth, and now we come to get our honours in heaven;" and a voice from within says: "I never knew you." Another crowd advances and says: "We were very moral people on earth, very moral indeed, and we come up

to get appropriate recognition." A voice answers: "I never knew you." After awhile I see another throng approach the gate, and one seems to be spokesman for all the rest, although their voices ever and anon cry, "Amen! amen!" This one stands at the gate and says: Let me in. I was a wanderer from God. I deserved to die. I have come up to this place, not because I deserve it, but because I have heard that there is a saving power in the blood of Jesus." The gatekeeper says: "That is the password—'Jesus! Jesus!'" (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The gates of the city*:—Bearing in mind still that this is a description of the ideal Church, we have here four suggestive features presented to our attention. I. THE CHURCH IS A WALLED CITY WITH MANY GATES. "And had a wall great and high, and twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels." Evidently there is no exclusiveness here, but there is protection from unsanctified and unlicensed intruders. The wall is for a bulwark, but not for a barricade; it separates from the world, but it does not shut out the world. And angels stand at the gates—large-hearted, loving angels, not bigoted priests, not stern and crabbed formulators of creeds, but angels with the sweet face of charity; and they stand there, not so much to challenge intruders, as to trumpet forth into every corner of the world their summons, "Come in and welcome." A walled city, but with an abundance of open gates. That is the true idea of the Church. Separate from the world, yet always uniting the world; offering freedom of access to all, but license to none. But men have always been trying to improve on this idea. Heaven's methods are too simple for their self-conceited ingenuity. The pattern in the mount wants accommodating to the state of things below. Men have always been trying to improve on this idea of the Church, and in improving have defaced and marred and impoverished and corrupted it. On the one side we have the gates of the city closed, and nothing left but some narrow back stairs entrance, and that so covered over with a network of forms and creeds and subscriptions and questions that only the most pliable and yielding souls can worm their way through. But on the other side—and this is by far the greater danger at present—we have not only the gates multiplied, but the very walls thrown down, and the guardian angels dismissed, as though they were no longer needed. Come in where you like, how you like, believing what you like, or as little as you like. Let us take care that we abuse not in this way the sacred name of charity. I am willing to pay a great price for brotherly love, but to buy it at the cost of truth is a losing bargain. There are twelve gates lying open to all the world, and voices on every watch-tower singing the song of welcome: "Come in, come in. But come in the name of our Lord and Saviour." II. A CITY WITH GATES ON EVERY SIDE: NOT ONLY PROTESTING AGAINST EXCLUSIVENESS BY THEIR NUMBERS, BUT PROCLAIMING THE GRAND CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH BY THEIR POSITION. "On the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates." It is another rendering of the Saviour's words, "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north and south, and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God"; and a picture of the same kind as that magnificent vision which floated before the Saviour's eyes when He stood under the shadow of the Cross and looked through the scorn and mockery of universal rejection at a world bowing at His feet, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." All the ages travail for its fulfilment. The gates of this city which point north and west have been crowded for a thousand years. III. EVERY GATE HAS ITS OWN PECULIAR BEAUTY AND ATTRACTIVENESS. "The gates of the city were twelve pearls, every several gate of one pearl"; that is, there are no two gates alike, but they are all alike beautiful. Here, firstly, is the carrying out of the thought which runs through the whole description—that the Church below, like heaven above, manifests its life, and power, and graces in infinite variety. There are all manner of precious stones; all manner of fruits; all manner of gates; all imaginable colours and forms. It is God's vindication of individuality; God's protest against cramping uniformity—against all attempts to fashion Christians in the same mould and turn them out after the same pattern. It means that Christ, in fashioning men, never repeats a design; that no two Christians are beautiful in exactly the same way; that no two Christians have the same training, the same experience, the same thoughts and feelings, but that God sends every one to a different school and subjects every one to a different discipline, that at last He may present every one perfect after a different fashion. All the pictures of heaven which I have seen are gross caricatures, for they represent rows of saints and angels as much alike as rows of pins. God does not fashion His jewels in that way. All very well for pins, but God's elect are not machine-made, turned out by the gross.

They all glow with the same Christ-light, but each of them is cut after a unique pattern. But further: there is a special meaning in the distinction and variety of the gates. It means that men enter the Church by different ways, and are drawn to Christ by various attractions. The promise which brought me peace as I knelt at the Master's feet would perhaps hardly have touched you at all; and the word which thrilled you would perhaps have fallen dull and meaningless on my ears. Christ has a separate song for every heart. Here is a youth, restless, fiery, full of activity, eager for some great field of battle. Christ chants this battle-song to him: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." Here is a student panting for knowledge, fired with a passion for truth, ready to suffer martyrdom for it. He hears a voice behind him saying, "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Here is a mystic, who longs to break the veil of the unseen, dreamy, idealistic, half inclined to believe in spiritualism, courting fellowship with invisible souls. Christ sings to him thus: "Ye are come unto an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." IV. THE GATES ARE ALWAYS OPEN. "The gates shall not be shut by day." Yes, the gates are open! You have heard of that girl who had left her father's house and wandered into paths of sin; and one night there came over her a flood of shameful remorse and the agony of a great repentance, and she thought she would go back and look at the old home again, but not to enter. Ah, no! those doors were closed for ever. Just to look—one stolen look—at the old Paradise, and then back into darkness and despair! And with tear-blinded eyes and wearied feet she crept up to the door in the silent midnight hours, and half mechanically put her hand upon the latch; and lo, the door opened, and she entered. For the father had said, "It shall be left open night and day; it may be that she will come back again." And there she lay until the morning, and awoke to find him kneeling by her side, kissing her with the sweet kiss of forgiveness. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *The heavenly Jerusalem*:—Let us take up two or three points in the inspired description of the city in this chapter and consider what they really mean. 1. Consider first what is said in ver. 13 "on the east three gates," &c. What do these twelve gates mean then, three on each side? What, save that the city lieth open and accessible to all quarters, and to all quarters alike? Now let us not fail to notice how strongly this contrasts with the character of all human institutions. How obvious it is that they are accessible to the few only, and almost in exact proportion to the advantages they offer is the smallness of the number of those who are admitted to share in them. The prizes of this life are only for the rich, the successful, the talented, the favourites of fortune; only its miseries, its sicknesses, its bereavements, seem the common heritage of all, of rich and poor, high and low, one with another. But it is not thus with the glories of the holy city; they lie equally open towards every quarter, equally accessible to men of every race and clime, and colour, and circumstance. Therefore take courage, O traveller Zionwards; if only thy face be set towards the holy city, thou too shalt surely find a gate open to admit thee, from whatever direction thou shalt come. 2. Consider next what is written about the city in ver. 15 that it "lieth foursquare," &c. The city is the same in every direction—thoroughly symmetrical, with no inequality about it; all is full, complete, utterly satisfactory, nothing falls behind the mark of the rest. How great and striking, again, is the contrast between this and any human happiness, any earthly good, so unequal, so incomplete as that always is! If well in one direction, so certainly ill in another; if pleasant for the body, so generally bad for the soul; if wholesome for the spirit, so generally grievous to the mind. But in heaven nothing will be wanting; perfect and equal extension will be the law of being; life will have its threefold expansion, in fulness infinite, in intensity perfect, in duration eternal. 3. Consider, again, how it is written in ver. 18 that "the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." We shall remember at once that no gold on earth is like this, for it is one of the qualities of gold to be opaque, however thin it may be beaten out; even gold-leaf is not transparent; the beauties of pure gold and of clear glass are never combined in this world. Nor, if they were, would the result be at all desirable for building purposes. For what would be the consequence if a city were made of such material? Why, that every house and every chamber would be transparent, and that one could look through the whole city from side to side. But what does this universal transparency signify in heaven, save that there will be nothing to hide, nothing to keep secret, but that all will be open to all, because nothing will be shameful and nothing selfish? And now, since we have

gone round about our Sion, and marked well her bulwarks and considered her palaces, tell me, O my fellow-pilgrims, shall this be really our home? It is ours, no doubt : we are heirs of it, joint heirs with Christ of all that He as man hath won for man ; but shall we certainly come into our inheritance ? Oh, my fellow-pilgrims, travellers together, as ye say, towards the heavenly Jerusalem ; this holy city, this happy city is certainly ours ; its joy is our joy, its glory is our glory. Shall a little toil, a little need for earnestness, a little necessity for patience, daunt us and defeat us ? Shall we fall short of so great and full salvation for want of a few years' careful watching, a few years' resolute striving ? (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *The gates of heaven :—* I cannot help thinking that there is more meaning in the vision than the mere quarter of the earth from which the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem are to come. I believe the gates refer also to the different periods of life at which persons go to heaven. The gates on the east side admit those who enter heaven in the morning of life, when the sun is just rising, and the dew is on the grass, and all is fair and bright, and full of beautiful promise. The gates on the west side admit those who enter heaven with heavy step, at the close of a long life, when the sun is setting, and the sad twilight shadows are gathering and deepening, making the path dim and indistinct, so that there is danger of missing the gates altogether. The gates on the cold, dark, wintry north side admit those who have had few advantages in life, who have been poor and friendless, whose circumstances have been unfavourable, and perhaps through much persecution and tribulation entered the kingdom. While the gates on the warm and sunny south side admit those who had prospered in life, to whom everything had been favourable and pleasant, who had no difficulties to overcome, and no trials to endure. Such, I believe, is a deeper meaning implied in the position of the gates of the New Jerusalem. (*H. Macmillan, D.D., LL.D.*)

Ver. 14. **And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**—*Names on the stones :—*The twelve apostles of the Lamb are for the most part obscure and hidden figures in the later gospel history. We have often wondered what became of them, and why the record of their toilsome, suffering lives was not preserved. We find them together on the day of Pentecost and a few subsequent days, and then persecution scatters them abroad, and their names, with one or two exceptions, appear no more. Paul, Peter, and John are the only members of the holy brotherhood whose services are honoured with historical recognition, and the rest are passed over in silence. Tradition, indeed, partly fills up the blank, and imaginative works have elaborated romances to supply the place of history. But it is none the less true that of the labours of the great majority of the apostles there is no trustworthy record whatever. It may be that some of them suffered martyrdom at an early period of their ministry ; some, perhaps, were prevented from achieving great success by imprisonment or banishment ; while others, like Andrew, may have been men of unobtrusive and retiring nature, and withal of such inferior power, that the results of their labours were too insignificant to gain public notice. Be that as it may, at the very commencement of the Church's history their names drop out. The names, which no human historian thought worth inscribing, are gathered together by God's own hand, the dust swept from their obscurity, and stamped in jewelled letters on the foundations of the everlasting walls. The meanest and the humblest names are made equal to the greatest and most honoured. **I. CHRIST, THE MASTER BUILDER,** WRITES THE NAMES OF HIS SERVANTS ALONGSIDE HIS OWN. He takes care that those who have been willing to forget themselves for His sake shall be eternally remembered, and that if they have been in a very small degree companions in His patience, they shall be in a very large degree sharers in His kingdom. The jasper superstructure on which His name shines does not overshadow and obscure the meaner stones on which their names are written. It rather illumines them by its more brilliant light, and makes the obscure names splendid. "Because He lives, they live also." They have been co-labourers with Him in His humiliation, and they are joint-heirs with Him in His glory. Now the "Ideal Church" is in this respect quite unique. There is nothing like it in the works and fashion of the world. On the great buildings which men raise only one name is inscribed. The founder or architect is immortalised, the helpers sink into speedy oblivion. Christopher Wren, says history, built St. Paul's Cathedral ; Michael Angelo, St. Peter's ; and with superb disdain it sweeps all their co-labourers into the dust of forgetfulness.

In every battle of the warrior it is the general alone who carries off the palm. And even in great moral and religious works the same rule holds. On the basement of the Reformation building we find only the names of Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, and one or two others. The rest, if they were ever written, have been worn away by the slow abrasion of time. Now were this rule carried out in the building of the Church, we should find no name on the foundation walls but Christ's. For He was the designer, His throughout was the directing and inspiring mind. It is a city, as John tells us, not earth-built, but coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and adorned throughout by the Divine hand of its builder. His name, therefore, is alone worthy to be inscribed on its walls. But the Master casts aside human rules, and honours His servants after a fashion of His own.

II. THE OBSCURE AND UNRECORDED WORK ABIDES IN DEATHLESS CHARACTER, AND REAPPEARS IN IMMORTAL GLORY. When the work of faithful souls is too insignificant to attract the attention of human scribes, God takes the part of historian, and writes the record, not on melting wax or fading paper, but on everlasting stones; or rather, He makes the work live and tell its own tale. Each one of these disciples, whether obscure or renowned, has added one precious stone to the eternal building. Their sorrows and tears and secret prayers, their pleadings of love and self-forgetfulness, their charity and faith and patience, have been thrown into God's alembic, into God's refining furnace; and there comes forth in each case a precious stone, with the name of the worker inscribed on it, and it remains for ever "a spectacle unto angels and unto men." It has taken its place as one of the never-to-be-forgotten facts; and heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one jot or tittle of its glory shall be diminished. It is well that Christian workers of every kind should lay to heart this joyful lesson, and especially those who are ever complaining that they are labouring in vain, and spending their strength for nought. Such a thing is not possible in the holy building of Christ. No statistics have chronicled our exploits, no human praise has flattered our vanity—that is often all. But God writes success where men write failure. Heaven sees triumphs in what the world calls blanks. The only true history is that which God writes, and His history is made up for the most part of unrecorded facts. Here are the stones on which you laboured, which seemed like clay there, but are now sapphire and chalcedony, all beautiful and complete, the human marks in them made Divine, the lines of mingled light and darkness transfigured into perfect glow; and if you look on them carefully you will find that where you wrote only Christ's name He has written yours. Most men are trying to write their own names.

III. IN THE IDEAL CHURCH THE LOWLY AND OBSCURE WORKERS HAVE EQUAL RECOGNITION WITH THE GREAT AND RENOWNED. The most unknown of the apostles are placed in line with the best known. No one would be surprised to find the name of Paul in the foundation stones. We should look for that writ in largest characters of gold. For we know that with mighty signs and wonders he preached the gospel from Illyricum unto Jerusalem, won great trophies for the Master's kingdom, and laid more stones upon the building than any other worker. But we should hardly look for the names of Andrew, and Thomas, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and the rest, or if we did we should expect to find them writ in letters so small and indistinct as to be scarcely legible. For the part which they took in the great building, if measured by visible results, was quite insignificant. James suffered martyrdom almost as soon as he had put his hand to the work. Andrew was too retiring to do great things. But our text shows that the Divine Master has a grand disdain of all these differences. The great and small, the known and unknown, are equally recognised. The world measures men by their visible triumphs. "All history," says Carlyle, "is at bottom the history of great men," and that means the history of men who have made most noise in the world, and achieved the greatest successes. "It is natural," says Emerson, "to believe in great men. The knowledge that in the city is a great man raises the credit of all the citizens; but enormous populations, if they be all beggars or all obscure, are disgusting—the more the worse. Our religion," says he, "is the love and cherishing of these great men." And this is the best gospel that the world has for those of us who are obscure, who do our work in quiet places. But, thank God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the gospel for common and obscure men. Its promises of honour are given to the humblest. All that Christ requires is that the one talent should be used as faithfully as the five; that being done, the honour at the end is equal. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*)

Foundations of precious stones:—By engraving upon the "foundations" the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, John emphasises that standpoint, from

which we view these foundations as representing the life and power of the Christ as received and manifested by His redeemed people, of whom the twelve apostles are here representative. The Christ becomes the foundation of the city only as He enters in all the fulness of His power and glory into the lives of men. The Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection uphold and upraise a new world only as they are transformed into vital truth and living force in the waking heart of human life. These precious stones have a human setting, and the brightness of them should and can be found in the lives of men. In brief, they denote all those Diviner qualities and forces that enter into the life of man from the Christ of the Cross. Thus we are led, as we anticipated, to see that John views the "foundations" as an adequate cause for the production of the ideal city. It not only supports the city, but the city must spring forth from it. It already contains the Divine energies by which the New Jerusalem shall be erected. If these foundations are present there can be no difficulty in conceiving a time when the completed city shall stand—the joy of the earth.

1. The preciousness of the foundations is very emphatic. The most precious material things in the world are chosen to symbolise it. John is clear on the point that the ideal city cannot be raised except on foundations of the Divinest quality, on a base where man's deepest life enters into fellowship with the glory of God. When we apply this principle to modern schemes for the construction of an ideal social life, we find that they disastrously fail to stand the test. For what are the foundations on which many would raise the temple of human glory? They would raise it on the foundations of intellectual advance, of scientific achievement and progress, of industrial invention, of the growth of moral science and art, of the increase of material resources, and of political changes. Alas! the foundations are brass, iron, wood, hay, stubble. No temple of true glory can ever be raised on such a base. The poverty of the foundations would be repeated in an intenser degree in the poverty of the city. The ideal city can stand only on a base of precious stones.

2. Another thought that forces itself upon us is the vastness and comprehensiveness of the foundations of the city. Not only does this city rise like a living growth out of a Divine root, where the most precious forces are enc centred, but the preciousness of its base is equalled by its incomparable immensity. "I determined," said Paul, "not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." There are some that would call this a narrow sphere of action, but that is because they are blind, and cannot see the wonder of God. In Jesus Christ the fulness of the infinite stretches around us, beneath us, and above us. He that would see and feel the power of the immeasurable, let him come hither. There are those that would explain away the incarnation of God by calling it a beautiful fiction. And, having done this they desire to have credit for breadth! They reduce the unspeakable wonder of the Atonement to a human exemplification of heroic fortitude. And then they desire to pose as men of expansive views! Poor fools! Their little horizon has narrowed around them until they can touch it with their outstretched hands. The length, and breadth, and height, and depth of the world has disappeared for them. Their little foundation will not bear the weight of a single human soul, much less the city of God's coming ages of glory.

3. The manifoldness and variety of the city's foundations are also set forth graphically in this picture. They are adorned with "all manner" of precious stones. Not only must there be room in the structure of the city of God for a host of variant types, but such variety must of necessity be present in order to give it perfection and fulness. One uniform monotony would be an eternal weariness. So on far-extending and diverse foundations a rich manifoldness of life is based, and true lives of every mould shall be upreared on the city's twelve foundations.

4. Our last thought is the homogeneity of the city's foundations. They are far-extending and various, yet through it all they possess a common nature. They are all "precious stones." They all pertain to that which is most precious—that is, to that which is Divinest in human life. John will have no admixture of the lower elements of life in the foundations of the city. The gospel of Jesus Christ will tolerate no admixture of worldly wisdom or achievement. Such admixture would only destroy its power. Some very clever people have what they call an eclectic religion. They put together stray bits from different religions and call this a collection of treasures. Such a gathering of odds and ends can never be the foundation of the holy city. All that we need is found in Jesus Christ, and in the Jesus Christ whom the apostles proclaimed. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

Vers. 15-17. **A golden reed to measure the city.**—*A talk with children—measures*.—What should we do in life without measures? This beautiful building could not have been erected as well as it has been if there had not been a good deal of very precise measuring, so that everything should fit into its proper place, without a chink or crack to be seen anywhere. So, every house that is built, every road that is laid out, and especially every railroad, requires a great deal of measuring. When, too, you have to draw a map, or plan, you must be very precise about your measurements to do it properly. Then, again, the singers' measure. They have so many beats to the bar. Even poetry is governed by different measures. John says the heavenly city had been measured carefully—"And the city lieth four-square, . . . and he measured the city with the reed." The first measure that people used was just a reed out of the hedge: a very rough and ready sort of thing; but it answered the purpose if it was exactly the right length. But as we get more and more respectable, we adopt more costly measures. They are not necessarily a bit more correct; but they are more imposing. We have our wooden measures; then comes the ivory measure; and in this instance we have the costliest of all materials, namely, gold—a measure to measure the city which is a golden reed. Everything was measured with great precision—"the gates thereof, and the walls thereof," &c. Now I want to show that it is God's will that you should do everything in this way systematically and punctually—not by rule of thumb, as we call it. Some of the old people used to measure with their thumbs. You know there are some who do that to-day. They reckon an inch between the point of the thumb and the first joint. That is the rule of thumb, and is not very exact. Now what God would have us do in life is not to measure anything in that haphazard way, but everything by a certain and infallible standard. Now, this Book is God's law from heaven for life on earth; and there is one great standard of whom this Book speaks, namely, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul teaches us that it is possible for us by the grace of God to come up to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. He is our infallible standard; and nobody else is infallible. There are some very good people whose example it is well for us to imitate, in so far as they follow Christ, but no further. Whenever even they fall short, we must not imitate them. We are to go back to the original standard, even Jesus Christ our Saviour. This Book further teaches us what we ought to do. "Ah," you say, "we so often fail." Yes you do; and there forgiveness comes in. There are many sins. Some fall through ignorance: they do not know any better, and the Lord forgives them freely. Others sin through sheer wickedness; and if even they repent, the Lord will forgive. But our aim should be to come up to the standard; and the Saviour will give us every needful grace to do so. We could not do much without Him; but we can do a great deal through Him. (*D. Davies.*) **Two cities**.—The book of the Revelation is full of contrasts:—*e.g.*, Michael and the dragon; the woman clothed with the sun, and the woman clothed in scarlet; the beast and his mark, and the Lamb and His mark. One might almost re-arrange the contents in a series of contrasts or antitheses, culminating in the great antithesis of Babylon and the New Jerusalem. I. **THE APPEARANCE OF THE TWO CITIES.** Both lie foursquare, but—In Babylon there are no natural heights; such heights as there are, are artificial, and barely rise to the level of the walls. In the New Jerusalem, on the other hand, the height and the length and the breadth are equal. Surely this well represents the difference which exists between the world and the Church. Worldly ambition can, at most, rear for itself some mound of fame; the saints progress by an upward pathway which winds towards the summit of the holy mountain. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion." II. **THE RIVERS WHICH WATER THE TWO CITIES.** Babylon was watered by the Euphrates, of which the source lay without the walls. The city was taken through this radical defect; the invaders, altering the course of the river, entered secretly along the river-bed. In the New Jerusalem the river of the water of life has its source in the midst of the city, flowing out from beneath the throne, which occupies its midmost summit. In either case the river is a type of health and happiness. The pleasures of the world, however, are never safe from pollution at the source. Disease and death may taint them at any time, or draw the stream into other channels. But "there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and that river has its source protected; it confers pleasure "for evermore," because it is sheltered by His right hand. III. **THE COMPARATIVE SIZE OF THE TWO CITIES.** Babylon was a "great city"—about three times the size of London. Yet, comparing the measurements which Herodotus gives of Babylon

which St. John gives of the New Jerusalem, we find that the latter would contain just 10,000 of the former. The world has great influence, and the cause is adequate to the effect; yet how comparatively insignificant it is when we contrast its pretensions with the greatness of God's Church! IV. THE GATES AND STREETS OF THE TWO CITIES. Babylon here seems to have the advantage—one hundred gates instead of twelve. The advantage, however, is only apparent, and serves to illustrate its real deficiencies. For observe—Babylon is built on a plain, with twenty-five gates on each side, and streets running from gate to gate; its ground-plan forms a series of squares held together by the limiting square of the walls. The New Jerusalem is built on a hill. The city is pyramidal in form; all the streets run up towards the summit, and meet in the vicinity of the throne. The world is held together by restraint; its elements have all a pseudo independence; its motto is, "Each for himself." It has no true principle of unity. In the Church, on the other hand, there is a centre of attraction. "The throne of God and of the Lamb" gives to the whole an organic unity. Its members may approach from different sides, but all of necessity approach the centre. Their motto is, "Thy will be done"; in dependence on that will they are united. (C. A. Goodhart, M.A.)

The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.—*The symmetry of life*:—So much of the noblest life which the world has seen dissatisfies us with its partialness; so many of the greatest men we see are great only on certain sides, and have their other sides all shrunken, flat, and small, that it may be well for us to dwell upon the picture which these words suggest, of a humanity rich, and full, and strong all round, complete on every side, the perfect cube of human life which comes down out of heaven from God. I. THE LENGTH OF LIFE. All men have their special powers and dispositions. Each man finds that he has his. That nature which he has discovered in himself decides for him his career. What he is, even before he knows it, has decided what he does. His life has run out in a line which had the promise and potency of its direction in the nature which his birth and education gave him. All his self-culture strove that way. Through the confusion and whirl of human lives, his life ran in one sharp, narrow line, from what he knew he was, to what he meant to be and do. That clear, straight line of unswerving intention, that struggle and push right onward to the end—that is the end of his life. To have an end and seek it eagerly—no man does anything in the world without that. Therefore, we may freely say to any young man, Find your purpose and fling your life out to it; and the loftier your purpose is, the more sure you will be to make the world richer with every enrichment of yourself. This, you see, comes to the same thing as saying that this first dimension of life, which we call "length," the more loftily it is sought, has always a tendency to promote self-development. II. THE SECOND DIMENSION OF LIFE IS BREADTH. Breadth in a man's life is its outreach laterally. It is the tendency of a man's career to bring him into sympathy and relationship with other men. First, the man's own career becomes to him the interpretation of the careers of other men; and secondly, by his sympathy with other men, his own life displays to him its best capacity. His task is always glorified and kept from narrowness by his perpetual demand upon it, that it should give him such a broad understanding of human life in general as should make him fit to read, and touch, and help all other kinds of life. III. THE HEIGHT OF LIFE IS ITS REACH UPWARD TOWARD SOMETHING DISTINCTLY GREATER THAN HUMANITY. The reaching of mankind towards God! Evidently, in order that that may become a true dimension of a man's life, it must not be a special action. It must be something which pervades all that he is and does. It must not be a solitary column set on one holy spot of the nature. It must be a movement of the whole nature upward. To any man in whom that uplifting of life has genuinely begun, all life without it must seem very flat and poor. (Bp. Phillips Brooks.)

The proportionateness of the spiritual kingdom of God:—The proportionateness of the Holy City as an illustration of what ought to be the proportionateness of another structure. I. Some are disproportionate through ISOLATED HEIGHT. Such a one was, at first, the Apostle John. He saw a city in the air, and gazed into heaven. There are many such who dreamily meditate upon the glories of heaven. Such are often the very ones who would pass the beggar-child on the street. They do not notice the tear-dimmed eyes and the anguish of the suffering face; for they are hurrying home to read, perchance to weep over thoughts that are beautiful. The height and the length and the breadth are not equal. II. Others are disproportionate through ISOLATED LENGTH. These are the exclusively practical people. They see the plain matter-of-fact way of duty before them, and they walk bravely

along it, yet they have never caught a glimpse of the lights in the streets of the city of God. The length and the height and the breadth are not equal. III. Others still are disproportionate through *ISOLATED BREADTH*. Some are broad for the sake of being broad, and there is no beauty in such. They delight in making a parade of their breadth; they enjoy the look of surprise and pain on the face of some saint of God. They imagine themselves to be liberal, but their knowledge is scant. In them is no height of contemplation; they have never dreamed a dream of the Holy City, nor have seen the Lamb in the midst of the throne. In them is no length of practical usefulness; they have not visited the widow and fatherless in their affliction. Even the breadth which they have is the laxity of ignorance and waywardness, and that is all they have. The breadth and the height and the length are not equal. Some naturally incline towards the heights of spiritual meditation, to gaze on the glories of the Holy City; others towards the plain pathway of the practical; others still towards the breadth by which they hear other voices expressing other thoughts of God's universe. Others, again, pass through the various stages in succession; while still others possess these three qualities in different degrees. It is the purpose of God, by His grace, to make these qualities in the youthful soul proportionate and harmonious—to make the height, the length, and the breadth equal. Some day a scholar will write a book in which he will tell how God sought to accomplish this in one and another of the disciples. The book will be one of rare suggestiveness. John, the beloved, had the height and the breadth—to him came the command to cast out devils. Paul scaled the heights of contemplation when he meditated upon "the exceeding riches of His grace," and he passed far along the way of duty when he answered the call, "Come over and help us." But he needed the breadth, and this he must gain by the sympathy of a common suffering. Therefore came the thorn in the flesh; and thus he saw in the breadth of sympathy at once the sorrows of others and the sorrow of the Son of Man. In the souls of young Christians, the height and length and breadth will meet together in the clear and harmonious colours of a rainbow of our God. The Christian religion, and it only, extirpates or represses no noble instinct; it welcomes height and length and breadth, and all that is included in them, and gives to each its proper place. But we need an ideal to be before us. We look on the noblest sons of men one by one, and find them marred by reason of irregularity. Where shall we find this ideal? Within the magic circle of the Person of the Man Christ Jesus all these three are presented in absolute fulness and exquisite harmony! We stand in awe of the heights of heavenly contemplation of which glimpses are given to us. When He departed into a solitary place, when He lifted up His eyes to heaven in communion with His Father, He drew aside the veil and showed to us the glories of heavenly contemplation. Then, to think of the practical aspect of His active life. How He toiled to realise the Messianic plan by training the twelve, by announcing the laws of the kingdom, by healing every sickness and every disease among the people! Then in Him was breadth bounded only by the universe, broad as the love of God. It was a breadth which led Him to hear voices of sheep not of this fold who would yet enter to find pasture, that there might be one fold and one Shepherd. It is the priceless privilege of every young Christian who has yielded himself to God through Christ, to seek to attain by His grace towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; for in Him and in Him alone the height and the length and the breadth are equal. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper.—*The jasper superstructure*:—That is, the superstructure, all that part of the wall which rises above the foundation rows, was one great mass of brilliant jasper. There was jasper at the foundation and jasper at the summit; this stone is "the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, of the heavenly building, clasping the intervening rows together by two perfect bands of light." Now what this jasper was cannot be exactly ascertained; but it is perfectly certain that it was not the stone which bears that name now. The common jasper is of many kinds. Sometimes purple, sometimes cerulean, sometimes green, and more frequently a green stone streaked with veins of red. Moreover, it is not very precious, not distinguished by its brilliancy, and it is far surpassed both in beauty and worth by many others. These marks prove beyond question that our jasper is not the stone which was in the apostle's mind. The descriptions which are given of it in the Apocalypse correspond exactly with the characters of the diamond, and unless the diamond was unknown to the

ancients, which is hardly possible, the jasper must have been this stone. But whether the diamond or not, the jasper of John's vision had all the characteristic features of the diamond. It was the most precious of stones, it shone like the sun, and, while showing no particular colour, contained all the colours in its pure, white light. Bear in mind, further, that the jasper throughout the Apocalypse is the type of Christ. "He that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper," says the inspired writer; and, further, "God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of the city," and "this light is like unto a jasper." The thought of our text, then, is this—that above the foundation rows, with their stones of various colours and of various price, is the stone most precious, most brilliant, shining with the pure, white glorious light of Christ. Christ is the top-stone as He is the chief corner-stone, the superstructure as He is the foundation. I. THE SUPERSTRUCTURE OF THIS BUILDING CONTAINS IN PERFECTION AND COMPLETENESS ALL THAT THE FOUNDATIONS HAVE IN IMPERFECTION AND INCOMPLETENESS. The sapphire, the chalcedony, the sardius, and the rest, are very beautiful; but they are stones of one or, at most, two colours, and these colours not clear, but flecked and stained with spots and dark lines; while the white light of the jasper, like the white light of the sun, contains all the colours, and contains them in unmixed purity. As all the hues of the rainbow are in the sun's rays, so all the hues of the twelve foundation stones are combined in the splendid jasper band which crowns the summit. Or, putting it in other words, while the foundations have each their separate grace, and shine each with their distinct glory, the jasper superstructure holds all the graces, there all the glories unite. All the special qualities found separately in the stones below are found in splendid combination in the building above. And this means—1. That Christ combines in Himself all actual and possible graces. The prophets and apostles and holy men of old were like the rows of foundation stones, men of one colour, of some one or two distinguishing graces. At their best they were still one-sided men; giants in one Christ-like virtue. God's glory shone through them all, but they were imperfect mediums. They intercepted more than they transmitted of it: they showed only one or two hues of the jasper light in perfection. But Christ unites them all, and shows them all in their most complete and glorious form. It is this all-comprehending beauty and perfection of Christ that charms us, touches every fibre of our moral nature, and chains our wandering fancies to His feet. Everything that we have ever admired, or ever longed for in our best moods, meets us here. Here is perfect love and sinless anger; mighty self-assertion, and still mightier self-abnegation; a child's humility, and a king's dignity; a peasant's simplicity, and a philosopher's profundity; David's fearlessness, Elijah's zeal, Isaiah's raptures, Jeremiah's tears, a woman's tenderness, and God's almighty strength. Yes: in Him is all that the most aspiring souls ever longed for, and the most heroic hearts ever throbbed for. "He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." 2. The ideal Church, the Church that is to be, combines in itself, like Christ, all the graces. It is growing up out of the parti-coloured stones into the white, all-embracing jasper. The Church, as we have known it in history and experience, has always been one-sided; the successive ages of the Church have been almost exactly like the foundation stones, showing each of them one prominent colour. Each period in the Church's history has been distinguished by one strongly marked Christian virtue. The first age was bold in confessing Christ, strong in its contempt for the world, full of the martyr's zeal; yet strangely impatient, almost inviting martyrdom. That early Church was sublime in some of its moods, but altogether childish in others. Look at the early monastic age again. There also the Church is strong in its contempt for the world's pleasures, in its power to trample on the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life; but there is no Christ-like sympathy, no concern for a guilty, sorrowing world. See again the Church of the Reformation. It has a giant's strength and courage; faith mighty enough to remove mountains. It walks with God, but its sternness is not tempered by the gentleness of Christ. It has the Master's hatred of sin without the Master's mercy for the sinner. And the Church of to-day, while great in charity and humanitarianism, is in danger of becoming, if it has not already become, just as one-sided in another way. It is tempted to look only on the gentle side of Christian doctrine, to let charity enfeeble its robustness, and pity for the sinner engender shallow views of sin. But the Church is striving up, patiently, through the coloured rows, to the superstructure. When it has attained that it will no longer be a partial, one-sided Church, but beautiful, with all the graces of the Master. More faithful than the early Church, purer from the world's

stains than the Monastic Church, stronger in its zeal against sin than the Reformation Church, and more tender and charitable than the Church of to-day. Nothing will be lacking to its completeness. 3. The same thing is true of the individual believer. Our growth in Christ is like that of the Church—each stage characterised by some prominent grace, but not one of them uniting all the graces. In the early stages of the Christian life there is much faith and courage, but little patience; in the later stages, great patience, but often diminished zeal. The average Christian is never eminently Christ-like at more than one or two points. It is as if he had to starve one grace to feed another. When our lives are fairest and our faith strongest we still show only one or two sides of the beauty of our Lord. We have His tenderness without His strength, or His gentleness without His stern hatred of sin, or His boldness without His forbearance. But this is because the building has not yet risen above the foundation rows. The superstructure of it is of jasper. We shall be "complete in Christ." When He has finished the work in us there will be nothing wanting. No partial colouring there, but the white jasper light which combines all the hues. For each believer, then, as well as for the Church, "the building of the wall is of jasper." II. THE BEAUTY AND GLORY OF THE SUPERSTRUCTURE ARE MADE UP IN GREAT PART OF THE ELEMENTS WHICH COMPOSE THE FOUNDATION. If you could take the twelve rows of stones, bring all their varied colours into combination, concentrate their diffused radiance, and remove all impurity, the result would be just such a brilliant diamond belt as the wall of jasper. As you trace the foundation stones from the base to the summit, you see them becoming continually more glorious and ethereal, nearer to the perfect white, the higher bands taking in all the colours of the underlying ones until the jasper completes and embraces all. And the thought is this, that the glory of the perfected Church will be made up, as it were, of all that it has been and done and suffered through all the ages of its history. In spite of all evidences to the contrary, the Church of to-day is stronger and more faithful and more able to wrestle and endure, more like her Master than she has ever been before. For she has learnt something, and won something, from every one of her past experiences. The fervour of the first centuries, the purity and contempt for the world of the monastic age, the strong warrior-like faith and courage of the Reformation period, have influenced her, moulded her, bequeathed their best features to her. And all her waiting, all her labours, all her conflicts, are still helping to supply the colours which are wanted for her perfect beauty, so that the jasper wall may be at last complete. And this truth holds of individual believers just as fully as of the Church. The superstructure of our lives, the glory to which we are growing in Christ, is made up in large measure of the trials and struggles and patience, the faith and hope and love, of our present changeful experience. If you look at the solar spectrum—that is, sunlight divided into its component rays by passage through a prism—you will see all the colours of the rainbow there; and not only these colours, but dark lines, thousands and thousands of them—dark lines, and quite mysterious, for scientists cannot explain them, or say what purpose they serve. Yet they are necessary parts of the ray, they join with the colours to make the light complete. And so it is with our lives when they are fashioned into Christ's perfect beauty, made up of many colours bright and sombre, from sorrowful blood-red to triumphant purple, and crossed with dark lines innumerable, incomprehensible. We would leave some of these colours out if we could, we should like to erase all the dark lines. We would have no red, especially—no passion, no tears, no sorrow. But the result would be miserably disappointing. For the royal purple is made up of blue and red, and the golden has red for its base, and the perfect white light needs all the colours and all the dark lines to make it complete. We cannot reach the jasper superstructure without passing through the trial and patience which are symbolised by the stones below. But all these things are helping to form the perfect Christ in us. The foundation-stones are beautiful because Christ is in them, but they are not like the top-stone which knows no darkness, no lines of sin, no incompleteness, and where joy and peace are stamped in perfect and eternal characters. We are reaching up to that, Christ's strong hand holding ours to make the ascent secure. And the superstructure is of jasper. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *The jasper wall*.—The picture of the measurement of the city has a colour and tone of triumph in it. Heaven rejoices in its divinely perfect proportions. God marks with the exactness of love the holy city that mirrors heaven's own beauty, and would proclaim its lineaments and proportions of glory to all the world. There

are some things that are not worth measuring. Heaven will take no copy of some lives, that they may die the sooner. The measurement also symbolises heaven's inexorable demand for ideal perfection in human life. In the city of God there must be no defect or redundancy. The vessels of God's glory must be without flaw and without alloy. No column in His temple shall be broken or deficient. God will not stop half-way, or be content with rough approximations to His ideal. Hence it is that the best human structures must fail and be condemned. This measuring is, therefore, further, a symbol of eternal preservation. To "measure off" implies a selection for some purpose or other, and here it is clearly for the purpose of honour and preservation. In the first verse of the eleventh chapter we find "the temple of God and the altar, and them that worship therein," measured in the same way, while "the court without the temple" is left unmeasured. In that passage the symbol is explained by the assertion that the "outer court" is so far left unprotected that it has been given unto the nations for forty and two months. I. The first question that presses for an answer in any attempt to interpret this symbol is, What relation does the jasper wall hold to the general structure and constitution of that city? 1. In the first place, the "jasper wall" gives unity to the varied expanse of the city. In the ancient conception, a city without a surrounding wall scarcely found a place in the mind at all, except as a picture of desolation and ruin. The myriad-sided life of the city and State can never be gathered into perfect harmony except within the wall of jasper, except by being pervaded by the Divine life in its profoundest manifestation of love. Men will of a certainty remain scattered, in spite of all human devices, until they are united by that transcendent love which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Through this, and through this alone, are those strong conflicting interests overcome that separate men from one another. 2. Further, this wall of jasper marks the extent of the city. With the encompassing wall the city ends. The description which John gives, therefore, represents the ideal city as being of vast and magnificent extent. It is bounded by the "jasper wall"—that is, by nothing of narrower dimensions than the vast thought, purpose, and power of redeeming love. At this point John adds symbol to symbol, in order that there may be no mistake as to his meaning, and that the meaning may be emphasised in the strongest way. The length and breadth and height of the city are given in symbolic numbers. The three are equal, and their measurement is twelve thousand furlongs. That is, we are informed by a new symbol that this city is as vast as the energies of the Divine kingdom of redeeming love. Of course, it is now clear that the length and the breadth and the height of it cannot be other than equal. In every direction of its life it must reach the full measurement of redeeming power. As far as the love of Calvary can transform the lives of men, as far as it can lift the thoughts and purposes and attainments of men towards the lofty heavens, so great is the length, the breadth, and the height of the holy city. 3. It is instructive to note, further, that the wall of a city was its great watch-tower. Upon its summit the watchman stood to take observation of the country around, to warn the city of danger, and to instruct it concerning the outer world. The walls of the ideal city are not only ramparts, but also watch-towers, the place of furthest vision. The blind children of this world make the mistake of supposing that the city of redemption is a narrow enclosure, which hides from us the wide and varied prospect which they imagine lies before themselves. They pity us, and invite us to leave the narrowness of the Cross, and the fetters of redeeming love, that our vision may become as free as theirs. It is they that are enclosed around, and cannot see afar off. The Cross is the true watch-tower of the mind, as well as of the spirit. It is not only the centre of power, but also of wisdom and knowledge. It is the light of God in which "we also shall see light." In proportion as we rise to the knowledge of the revelation of God in Christ, all the vast realm of thought will appear in its true character and proportions before us; for the God-man is, in every sense, the light of the world. 4. The jasper wall is, further, representative of the defence of the city. The need of defence against attack was probably the earliest reason for the construction of the ancient city walls, the other ideas of which we have spoken having afterwards grown upon this underlying one. So the ideal city is safe for ever, guarded by this wall of jasper, which is great and high. No battering ram can beat down these walls, for they are constructed out of the mightiest forces of omnipotence, the forces of eternal grace and infinite love. II. A few words will suffice to show the relation of the jasper wall to the foundations of the city. The first thing that strikes us as impressively suggestive is the fact that the deepest base

of the city and its towering walls are composed of the same material. When we begin to search for the strength of the twelve foundations, John meets us with the assertion: "The foundation is jasper." When we raise our eyes to behold its lofty ramparts, and would fain know what its topmost glory is that mingles with the skies, John again says: "The building of the wall thereof was jasper." It is the symbolic representation of the utterance of the Divine Saviour, who says: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." In Christ, the effulgence of the Father's glory, the first foundations are laid of the city of a glorified human life, and in Him its final splendour will be realised. The name of Jesus is the all-potent source of new life for the fallen sons of earth, and it shall be the eternal boast and wonder of the glorified. As is the lowest foundation of the holy city, so shall be its supremest splendour. The Cross can never be superseded. The wall of jasper is a living growth out of the foundations of precious stones. This living relation in the growth of the ideal city is determined by eternal and inexorable law. The city's jasper wall cannot be built unless the foundations are set in precious stones, and the deepest of these is jasper. Passing from symbolic language to plainer speech, the quality of a city's life cannot rise higher than its deepest foundations. The nature of the principles and ideals upon which men proceed will determine the value and permanence of such a social life as they are likely to create. Upon foundations of iron and brass nothing better than iron and brass can ever be built. If our ideals fall short of the divinest that are possible to men, if our deepest principles fall short of the glory of the eternal skies, then the building of the ideal city becomes for ever impossible for us. On the other hand, the foundations of precious stones cannot fail to issue in the wall of jasper. When Divine forces form the base, the city is certain to rise in the likeness of God. Out of the love of the Cross a kingdom of love shall of necessity grow. All ye that desire to build the jasper wall, remember that it cannot be built except on the jasper foundation. III. There are one or two points remaining in the characterisation of the jasper wall which must receive brief notice. One consists in the measurement of the thickness of the wall, which is declared to be a hundred and forty and four cubits—that is, twelve cubits by twelve. This is clearly, once more, the number that symbolises redemption, and so brings the thickness of the city-wall into line with the twelve thousand furlongs that measure the length and breadth and height of it. In the last place, it is instructive to note that the city when measured proves to be an exact cube. "The length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal." The cube has from ancient times been regarded as a symbol of ideal perfection. Here human life is at last full and complete, having found the complete cycle of its power. Probably, however, John's picture is more immediately connected with the form of the "holy of holies" in the tabernacle, which was also a perfect cube, no doubt based upon the ancient idea of that form as being specially perfect and sacred. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

Vers. 19, 20. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.—The foundation stones:—Our text is part of John's description of the New Jerusalem. It is the living city of the living God. I say, emphatically, the "living" city, for the apostle is thinking not so much of a place as of a people. The imagery, regarded superficially, would suggest to us a literal city, with actual walls and houses and streets; but a closer examination shows us that this was hardly the writer's intention. He tells us, for instance, that the twelve foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, that God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it, and that it is not lighted by sun or moon, but the Lamb is the light thereof. From all which we conclude that it is not a material but a spiritual city—a city whose stones are living souls, whose pearly gates and streets are resplendent, not with material radiance, but with the more ethereal light of moral and spiritual beauty. It is a city built and compacted together by Christ—Christ Himself being both the foundation and the superstructure of it. In a word, it is the redeemed Church of God. Not the Church as it actually exists. It is the bride adorned for her marriage without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Let us keep this in mind as we seek the interpretation of the imagery. I. THERE IS NOTHING BASE OR COMMON IN THIS CITY. Every part is most beautiful and every part most precious. It is this feature of the description which fills us with a sense of rapture. Now, remember we are speaking of a living city, not of mere dead walls and buildings. The meaning, then, is that every member of the glorified Church, every living stone on those living walls,

is of perfect beauty, and of priceless worth, most precious in the sight of God, most precious in each other's sight. Once common dust, stained with sin, fit only to be trampled on by God and all pure angels, now wrought by a Divine alchemy into radiant pearls and precious stones, so that even the place where God puts His feet is glorious. Now every streak of imperfection has been removed, every fault repaired. In the olden time alchemists spent weary days and nights, and wore their flesh to bone and their brains to madness, in striving to change the common metals into precious gold. Of course their labour was in vain; and yet the dream had a foundation of reality. Christ, the Divine transformer, has succeeded in a far grander sense than they thought and intended. There, on the radiant walls and streets of the New Jerusalem, are the proofs of His success. The common charcoal and the brilliant diamond are, as you know, of the same material. Each of them is simply a lump of carbon, and the chemist can actually change the splendid gem into dull black charcoal. But there his power ends; he cannot change it back again. And the world and the devil can put noble souls into their crucibles and turn them out black and lustreless. Their genius suffices for that transformation, and then fails. But Christ takes these marred elements and touches them back into such vivid splendour that they shine like jasper on the heavenly walls. And the Church of the Apocalypse is a treasure-house filled with these Christ-wrought jewels. It is the communion of beautiful souls, where "the feeblest is as David and David as an angel of God," where "a man is more precious than the gold of Ophir," where "each esteems other better than himself," and where the spiritual beauty of each one is the wealth of all. This is not, as some suppose, the setting forth of a heaven of material splendour—a magnified jeweller's shop, as it has been irreverently called. It is rather the exaltation of the moral over the material. It means that the true gold and pearls of the universe are the graces of God's elect souls. "The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones." II. The imagery of our text suggests INFINITE VARIETY. "All manner of precious stones." The apostle enumerates twelve of them, but these twelve are only representative of the greater number. Similarly the twelve gates of the city are pearls, but no two alike, for each several gate is of one distinct pearl. Further on, the tree of life, growing in the midst of the city, yields twelve manner of fruit: and so it is everywhere. There is only one feature of general likeness. Every part shines with the radiance of the jasper. The apostles of Christ were just as diverse in mind, manner, and disposition as any twelve men could be. James was a thorough conservative, Paul as thorough a radical. Peter was bold and enterprising, Andrew timid and retiring. John was imaginative and sanguine, Thomas prosaic and despondent. Yet they were all vessels made meet for the Master's service; all alike sanctified; all alike filled with the Divine Spirit; and now they are built up in the New Jerusalem, each one with his individuality preserved, each one a precious stone beautiful and glorious after its own kind. This living city has room for all manner of souls. See how Christ gathered them in. Fishermen and sailors, rude in speech and uncultured in mind; publicans, inclined to cautiousness and calculation; scribes, full of book-learning, exact and formal; Pharisees, in whom ritualism was ingrained; Roman centurions, soldierly and imperious; physicians, like Luke. An endless variety, indeed, whose peculiarities Christ's service would not remove, but only purify and deepen. Now they shine all manner of precious stones in the Holy City, making heaven's intercourse delightful. How significant are the words which follow our text! "The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it"; and further on, "They shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." "The kings of the earth"; that is, not the Cæsars, and Constantines, and Charlemagnes, but the more royal souls who are kings by the imposition of a Divine hand. And "the glory and honour of the nations," the most faithful of the Israelites, the noblest of the Greeks, the purest Romans, the most brilliant of Frenchmen, the most artistic of Italians, the strongest among German and Anglo-Saxon thinkers—all of them, with the fine qualities which distinguished them as nations, preserved and sanctified in Christ. The most gifted minds, the sweetest singers, the sublimest poets, the rarest geniuses, the bravest soldiers, the noblest patriots and statesmen—all the glory and honour of the nations. Christ claims the best of every kind to garnish the living walls. Chrysostom and Augustine its orators, Pascal and Malebranche its philosophers, Newton and Kepler its scientists, Dante and Milton its poets, Michael Angelo and Titian its artists. Men who were as devout in faith as they were gigantic in intellect, and these, and thousands of others as noble as they, have

brought their honour and glory into the city. Oh, what a building that will be when it is completed! What a society of elect and choice souls when every variety of human disposition, every manner of gift purified and immortalised, are gathered together in one redeemed company! "The foundation of the wall of the city was garnished with all manner of precious stones." III. The imagery of our text suggests THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH. The apostle enumerates singly and in their proper order the twelve foundation stones. He must have had some distinct meaning in this. The precious stones rising one above the other would represent, if we could only interpret them correctly, the growth, the upbuilding of the Holy City—the Church. And as the Church is built up exactly after the manner of the individual believer, we have also Christian growth represented in the picture. Now look for a moment at the twelve rows. There is first, as we might expect, the jasper, which represents Christ. All living, growing faith starts from that as foundation. There can be no enduring building on any other base. Next comes the sapphire, a rich blue stone, like the azure of the sky—that blue sky which is the everlasting type of calmness and peace. So this sapphire represents the second stage of Christian growth, the indescribable peace and calm which come from resting on Christ, and from the sense of forgiveness. The third is the chalcedony, white, and yet not unmixed white. It is the first purity of the Christian life, the purity of the young fervent disciple, not perfect, not altogether unselfish—for the beginnings of religious life are always too self-regarding—and yet very fair to look upon. The fourth is the emerald, a flashing green pearl, the colour which all poets of all nations have chosen as the symbol of hope, and so indicative of the hope which glows in the disciple's breast, enduing him for trial, and spurring him on to all his endeavours. Then comes the sardonyx, a stone with a white surface on a dark ground. See what that means—the fervour of the first love is gone, and the time of temptation and partial backsliding has come. The dark ground, the old nature, which was deemed dead, reappears, thrusting itself up under the Christian purity. Then follows the deep blood-red sardius, the type of suffering and patience and death—the type pre-eminently of Christ; for you remember, "He that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." The sardius after the sardonyx—suffering to correct impurity. For when the Church has lost the fervour of its faith and the glow of its love, and the dark world spirit is reappearing under its white professions, then nothing can avail but a new baptism in Christ, a fresh draught of His cup of martyrdom, fellowship in His sufferings, and conformity to His death. Trial, affliction, tears, are denoted by the blood-red sardius. Next is the chrysolite, washed with gold, radiant with the colour of gold, showing how the Church and the single believer come forth from their baptism of suffering refined and glorious, like gold. Then the beryl, blue again, to represent God's heavenly calm, but a richer, deeper and clearer blue than the sapphire, because that second peace which results from renewed baptism with Christ and a share in His sufferings is deeper and more enduring. The ninth is the topaz, where the green tints mingle with the gold. It is the exquisite commingling of joys realised and joys yet expected—a large measure of heaven now and a confident waiting for more. The tenth is the chrysoprasus, gold and blue. The riches of God's love, the wealth of increasing graces, and the peace which passeth all understanding. All through the colours are becoming purer and deeper and more refined. Last are the jacinth and the amethyst, the darker and the lighter purple, the colour which in all ages has done service as the emblem of victory and triumph, the colour into which the rainbow refines itself at last—for violet is the topmost of the rainbow's bands, and points upward to the deep heavens' hinting at far-off glories. So the Church has grown, through its long, wayward, distracted, man-vexed, God-guided history. Now pure and fervent and full of unspeakable calm; and now falling from its first faith and love, and needing to be crucified with Christ again and purified afresh by baptisms of martyrdom and pain; but ever rising to clearer knowledge, to larger charity, to purer faith, and to the still far-off hills of triumph. And thus do we rise from glory to glory. And yet that is not the last. For above the amethyst is the jasper again—"the superstructure of the wall is of jasper." That means like Christ at last. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) The street of the city was pure gold.—*The golden street*:—The "street of the city" stands for the lowest range of its life. In its foundations there must exist vast and eternal principles to make its many-sided life possible. Its "wall" of unity and defence must be equally resplendent. In its "gates" the vastest thoughts and forces and aims of the city find expression. But in the "street" that which is low and obscure finds its place.

There the narrower and lower interests of life are centred, the little wrangling in the bazaar or market-place, the little cares for daily bread. Such a symbol would not deny that there may be greatness and nobility in the street. 1. The ideal city is here presented as possessing lower and higher ranges of life. Looking at the "city of human life" as it is in actual existence at present, the "street" must correspond with what we call in an emphatic way the earthly relations of life, of which the human body is the typical medium and symbol. The lowest rung of life is that which has to do with the necessities and cravings of our physical existence. These constitute an influence that ever tends to drag us downward, to lower our ideals, to narrow our vision, and to dwarf our action. This antagonism between the higher and the lower, between the "foundations" and the "street," is forcibly brought out in our Saviour's injunction: "Do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Yet these earthly needs are ever with us, and the battle and struggle for earthly things fills a large place in human life. Though we cannot live by bread alone, we cannot yet live without bread. The "street" problem in our cities is one of vast proportions. The earthly side of life looms large, and threatens to overwhelm the others. It is in the corresponding relation in the ideal city that we must look for the street of gold. It is not to be supposed, then, that these earthly relations are in themselves an evil. On the contrary, they are a valuable addition to the sum of human life, just as the street is to the city. The evil consists in the abuse of them, in their degradation through sin and selfishness, or in giving them a position of false pre-eminence. The "walls" must not be flung down in order that the "street" may be seen. Yet without its street the city would be mutilated. Leaving the metaphors into which John's picture so strongly tempts us, let us remember that the total of human life is greatly enriched by its earthly side. The wider the range of desire, sensibility, and consciousness, the nobler are the possibilities of power. A life without higher and lower elements in it would be a dull monotony, a stagnant simplicity, like the same note struck for ever on the same string. To make the rich music of harmony you must have higher and lower notes. The secret of the wonder of our human lives is found in the great ranges of higher and lower, of which they are composed. St. John's symbols tell us that the life of the ideal city will be analogous to the present in this, that it will range all the way from the heavenly to the earthly, from the spiritual to the corporeal. There will still be earthly interests to attract, earthly tasks to perform, earthly pleasures to enjoy, and earthly ends to gain. The life of earth, in as far as it is innocent and pure, will be there in all its completeness. If the ideal city can in any sense be realised before the coming of Christ, it can only be as a smaller society within the larger whole of human life. For nothing appears to be clearer in the New Testament than that there will be ungodliness in the world at the time of His coming, and even ungodliness of a gross, arrogant, and powerful kind. 2. So we are led to another thought—namely, that in the ideal city there shall be nothing commonplace even in life's lowest range. I think most will instinctively feel at this point in our exposition that there is beautiful appropriateness in the selection of gold to describe the lowest element in the life of the holy city. So in this city there is nothing common or unclean. The street of the city of our life is at present full of commonplace. Very frequently it is but wood, hay, and stubble. And there are unfortunate moments when we even trample it into mire and clay. The dead level of earthly cares and interests seems often to mock the dignity of the spirit within us, and many of life's tasks and experiences seem trivial and mean. But in the holy city the lowest interests and powers shall be exalted into dignity. All the stubble of our daily life shall disappear. The street of the city shall be of pure gold. There are two or three ways in which this may be achieved. In the full glory of the ideal city there will, without doubt, be a considerable elevation in our earthly faculties and earthly relations. The children of the resurrection shall stand together upon a higher plane of life. Those things in our present earthly existence that are most gross and incidental shall disappear entirely, while all that is essential in the earthly and corporeal part of our nature shall be preserved and greatly exalted. A great elevation of earthly relations will also be secured by their due subordination. It is almost a truism, although a paradox, that the undue exaltation of earthly things effects their degradation. What is beautiful and appropriate in its due place becomes hideous and repulsive when it is exalted beyond its measure. By this means many earthly relations that

in their due place add to the symmetry and beauty of human life are so used as to make life a hollow and distorted thing. Thus the gold is perverted into dross, and the precious becomes injurious. So, when all things shall be subordinated according to their measure, the whole of life will rise in value, and that which is lowliest shall become exceeding precious. "The street shall be of pure gold." Further, the lowest relations of life will be raised by the Diviner spirit that shall be infused into them. Much of our life is common and trivial, because we exercise it in a common and trivial spirit. If we partake of the common meal in the spirit of holiness and love, it is no more common. It also becomes a sacrament, a holy thing, and a means of grace to the soul. In this way shall the lower ranges of life in the ideal city become greatly exalted. 3. Further, in this description of the street of the city there is a distinct indication of a special process of purification having been performed. In the eighteenth verse the word "pure" is used twice, so as to give it special emphasis. "Pure gold" is constantly used in the Scriptures to symbolise that which has been purified, and especially by fire. The application of this part of the symbol is obvious and striking. The lower ranges of life are pre-eminently those in which wood, hay, and stubble appear. But, as a kind of compensation for this, it is in this lower region of life that the fires of purification burn most frequently and effectively. The great discipline of men is carried on amid the sorrows, the disappointments, and the crosses of daily life. The great fires of a purifying Providence sweep through the streets of the city, burn up the dross, and purify the gold. 4. In the last place, John's symbol teaches us that in the ideal city the lowest range of life will be a mirror of the highest. The "street of the city" was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Leaving the language of symbol, all the lowest interests of the holy city will reveal the presence and the power of the higher. In every corporeal activity, in every earthly function, even in the lowliest tastes, the spiritual grandeur of the soul will be seen, and the spiritual ends of the life will be revealed. To raise the earthly that it may become the mirror of the heavenly should be our constant aim. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

Ver. 21. **And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.**—*The gates of pearl*.—It was no fantastic vision separated from all earthly associations that the seer of Patmos beheld. On the contrary, it was linked to all that was dear and sacred to himself and to his race. The forms were the same, but the materials were changed. The materials of the earthly city were substances that faded and decayed, for they had only a temporary purpose to serve; those of the heavenly were unchangeable and indestructible, matter in its most sublime and enduring form connected with the unceasing service of bodies and spirits of just men made perfect. Not from his recollections of his own old home could the unique feature of the gates of pearl have been derived. It must have been suggested by the circumstances of his island home, as Peter's vision on the housetop at Joppa took shape from the hunger of his body and the occupation of the tanner with whom he lodged. There was nothing to remind him of the gates of pearl in the earthly Jerusalem. I. **THE NUMBER OF THE GATES.** There were twelve of these gates; three on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. What a contrast does this feature of the heavenly city present to the narrowness and exclusiveness of the old Jewish polity! The Jews were the hermits of the human race. They were kept apart from all other nations on the high plateau which had walls of mountain, desert, river-trench, and stormy sea hemming them in on every side. It was considered unlawful for a Jew to keep company with or come in to one of another nation. The people prided themselves on their exclusive privileges as the favourites of heaven, and pushed to an extreme the restrictions of their religion. Even St. John himself could not altogether divest his mind of his Jewish prejudices. He could hardly yet realise the idea that the world was greater in God's eyes than Judæa. Unlike the little Jewish capital, type of its narrow creed, the heavenly city was vast as the largest thought or hope could compass, a perfect cube of twelve thousand furlongs, capable of containing all the cities of the world within its circuit. Through the earthly Jerusalem no river ran, no highway passed. Its gates were shut for safety and security in its mountain fastness. But through the heavenly Jerusalem the broad full river of life flowed; and through its gates or up the river the nations brought their wealth into it. Through its gates, open to the four quarters of the globe, a multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues had entered in. If there was one thing especially opposed to the whole tenor of Jewish thought, it was Christ's command to go into all the world

and preach the gospel to every creature. And to us in the Christian Church, who have been placed on a more elevated standing-point, and have been educated by eighteen centuries of Christian experience, the range of the Divine regard seems as limited as ever. We are accustomed to hear about the strait gate and the narrow way and the few who find it; and we make out of the saying a straitened faith and a narrow gospel. We need, indeed, the vision of the vast heavenly city—with its twelve gates pointing to every part of the compass, and its multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation—to correct our narrow, selfish judgments of men, and to enlarge our hopes of the destiny of the race. That vision is the highest illustration of the teaching of Scripture by precept and example, that God is no respecter of persons. But while there are many modes of entrance into the heavenly city corresponding to the varying conditions and circumstances of men, there is only one way of salvation. The gates of the New Jerusalem, although twelve in number and placed on different sides, are nevertheless composed of the same material. Every several gate is of one pearl. It is the one Cross that draws all men to the Saviour. It is by the rugged, tear-stained path to Calvary that the Good Shepherd finds every lost sheep straying in the wilderness and brings it back to the fold. We are told that the gates are not shut day or night. They are not needed for defence or security like those of the earthly city, for the inhabitants dwell in a peaceful habitation, and in a sure dwelling and in a quiet resting-place. Like the broken sword laid in the grave are the gates of the celestial city. Their existence reminds the inhabitants of a former condition of warfare and insecurity, while their open state shows the contrast between the old guarded fortress, exposed to continual alarms, and the present freedom and enlargement of the quiet habitation, defended only by the glory of God, as the wide border of Canaan was guarded by angel sentinels during the keeping of the solemn feasts. For beauty therefore, not for use, the heavenly city has its twelve gates. All that might cause fear or a feeling of insecurity will be gone for ever; but all that will remind the redeemed of the way by which they had been led in the past, all that will enhance the value of the Saviour's love and serve to deepen their own peace, will be kept before their minds by everlasting memorials. II. THE MATERIAL OF WHICH THE GATES WERE COMPOSED. Every several gate was of one pearl. What a beautiful symbol this is! Death is the gate by which every one must enter the heavenly city. And what a dark and gloomy appearance does it present to us on this earthly side! Sin has done everything possible to make the gate unsightly to poor creatures of sense. But how different is the entrance into the heavenly life! We pass through the iron gate of death, and looking back from the other side, from the golden street of the celestial city, we see it transformed into a gate of pearl. All its gloom has disappeared; all its relics of mortality have vanished. It is a triumphal arch for the passage of those who have been made more than conquerors through Him that loved them. How strange will be the transition to many of God's timid saints who are in bondage all their lifetime to the fear of death, who dread every allusion to it, and keep every object and association connected with it away from their eye and their mind! Through darkness into light, through pain and weeping into everlasting joy, through fear and dread into a bright and blessed assurance for evermore; the gate of iron changed into a gate of pearl; that which was an object of the utmost abhorrence into an object of admiration unbounded! How much do these gates of pearl say to the redeemed souls that have passed through them! To the inner ear these gates of pearl, set up where there is no more sea, speak of the far-off vanished seas of earth, through whose dangers the redeemed escaped safe to land. None, too, can gaze upon the gates of pearl without being reminded of their wonderful deliverances, when the Lord "drew them out of great waters" and cheered them with a precious promise like a pearl found in the depth—"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." They cannot think of the storm without thinking of Him who came through the storm to their help, and said to the waves within and without, "Peace, be still." How were these gates of pearl formed? The walls of the heavenly city are formed of jewels, each of which was crystallised in the dark depths of the mine, under the pressure of rocks, by igneous or aqueous agency. From sand and clay and coal, and other worthless or repulsive substances, they were sublimed into their present beautiful forms and hues, as the blossoms of the mineral kingdom. But the truth that what is fairest and most precious is obtained only through sore and long-continued struggle, which the jewelled walls witness to, is attested in a more tender and touching way by the gates of pearl. This substance is not of mineral

but of animal formation. A pearl is caused by the irritation of a minute parasite, or by the presence of a particle of sand or other extraneous matter accidentally introduced between the mantle and the shell of a species of mussel. The creature cannot get rid of it, and therefore to allay the irritation, covers it over with a series of layers of nacre or pearly matter. This smooth, round shining object, which feels so soft and pleasant to the touch, which reflects the light in a tender way like snow or moonlight, which is so precious that it is deemed worthy of a place in the crown of a monarch, is caused by a struggle with difficulties, an effort to overcome a trial; subliming by a wonderful alchemy, by the victorious power of life, into enduring patience a source of irritation, turning a worthless grain of sand into a pearl. The fact therefore that the heavenly gates are made of a substance with such a remarkable history as this, irresistibly suggests the trials by which those who pass through them are made meet for their abundant entrance into the city. That gate speaks of temptations vanquished, of degree of excellence reached through suffering, of a Divine beauty destined to supersede every mark of sorrow and be eternal. Who would have thought that out of the rough, broken, coarse-looking shell, as it appears on the outside, and by the labours and sufferings of a creature almost at the lowest point in the scale of life, whose structure is as simple as it can well be, without beauty of form or hue to attract, the glistening loveliness and preciousness of the oriental pearl could be produced! And who could have thought that out of the dark and sorrowful experiences of earth, purified by suffering, could have come the great white-robed multitude within the gates of pearl! (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Gates of pearl.—Thoreau thinks that he can trace the leaf pattern throughout all the kingdoms of nature, and he declares that the Creator, in making this earth, but patented a leaf. One who follows the building art through the centuries, from its first rudimentary principles to its consummate blossom in the mediæval cathedral, is impressed with the idea that the architect has but patented a door. A habitation without some way of getting into it was of course useless. The way of ingress and egress being the most important feature of the domicile, it naturally called forth the first exercise of that architectural skill which distinguishes man from the beaver or bird. This skill was shown by placing a horizontal stick or stope upon two perpendicular posts, and forming what is called a door lintel. This simple principle, multiplied and extended, gives us the common frame building or stone building, with windows and a flat roof. It is the principle which, under the touch of Grecian genius, resulted in that matchless gem of architecture, the Athenian Parthenon. It has been suggested that this simple door lintel, at some time or other, broke under the heavy weight which was placed upon it, and that the broken halves were set up against each other upon the doorposts in an inclined position. The transition from this arrangement to three or more wedge-shaped stones fitted together, was easy, and thus, in time, the arch sprang into being, out of which have grown the wonders of mediæval and modern architecture. The entrance way being thus, in a sense, the germ of the building, it is not strange that it should, in time, become the gem of the building. Being a conspicuous feature, and the first to attract critical inspection, it was natural that the architect should employ his subtlest skill in adorning it. Carrying our thought over into another realm, we are reminded that it is a rule of literature to be mindful of beginnings—to beautify the gateway. A preface is the most difficult part of the book to write. If well written, it is the most important part, for it predisposes the reader to a favourable acceptance of what is to follow. The same is true of introductions to speeches and lectures. "The success of a discourse," says Gaichies, "often depends upon the beginning. From first impressions, whether good or bad, we do not easily recover." And I am tempted to add that the same is true of people. From our first impressions of them we do not easily recover. Everything depends upon the gateways of life, and the reason, I think, has been made obvious, because at the portals we get our first impressions of the structure. Now I might turn this truth before you in a great many lights, and apply it in many ways, but I must confine myself to two of them. And, first, I think of the youth-time as the portal which opens into the realities of life, and I think how important it is to make of it a gate of pearl, that the young spirit which passes through may receive only wholesome impressions. What book lies upon the table? What words fall from the lips of parents and friends? Do they possess the pearl quality? Do they foreshadow to the child the grand, true man which he may be? Do they inspire him to be that man? I am just here reminded of three gateways and the impressions which they give of what lies beyond them. Should you take a drive or a walk upon a certain suburban road,

you would pass all three of them. At the first you would find a rickety gate swinging askew upon a single hinge, as though making a vain attempt to obtain a bill of divorcement from the tottering post to which it is attached. Beyond the dilapidated gateway you picture to yourself a dilapidated farm, a dilapidated house, and a dilapidated family. The country proverb, "A farmer is known by his fences," comes to you, and you pass on, saying, "The owner of that place is a thriftless man." You may be mistaken, of course, but that is your first impression. A weary, heart-broken wife and mother, hinged to a thriftless, unfeeling, and perhaps drunken husband, surrounded with the weeds, the nettles, and the briars of domestic infelicities. Scowls and oaths, blows and recriminations, envy, impatience, irreligion—these are the influences through which thousands of the children of the land are looking into the untried future. It is the only gateway to life which they know. Is it any wonder that they make life a cruel, thriftless thing? But this suburban road will bring you to another gateway, an imposing structure, with massive stone posts, and two strong iron gates, which are closed. Over them is written, "These are private grounds; visitors not allowed. All trespassers will be promptly prosecuted." A magnificent estate evidently—broad, winding avenues, luxuriant shrubbery, and beyond, probably, acres of velvet lawn, with flowers from every clime, and a mansion wherein wealth and taste find rendezvous. But that frowning wall and that inhospitable gate! Strange, you say, that the owner should create so much beauty, and then wall it in to his family and a few friends. How many homes we find like this gateway, beautiful, thrifty homes, but seclusive and exclusive, in the sense of being closed to the outgoing and incoming sympathies and charities of life; homes in which children receive the impression that the great world which lies before them is a selfish world, and that their own lives, to be successful, must be devoted to selfish getting and selfish enjoying! But if you go far enough on that suburban road, you will find a third gateway, as imposing as the second, but it stands open, and from either side of it, around the broad acres, extends a low, rustic fence. Near the entrance is a sign bearing the words, "Visitors will kindly refrain from injuring the shrubbery." You notice the inviting seats and vine-covered arbours. As you look upon this vision of beauty, you feel very much as the good woman did, who, viewing her wealthy neighbour's well-kept grounds from her humble chamber, exclaimed, "How good the Lord is to give me the enjoyment of this paradise without the trouble of taking care of it!" You may be wrong in your estimate of the man who owns this estate, but you cannot avoid the impression that he is an open-hearted, public-spirited citizen, one who, in seeking enjoyment himself, is willing that the others should share it. And so you point another moral: Homes there are, yes, thousands of them, which to the young are like this last open gateway, suggesting and opening into a large, unselfish, beneficent life; homes where the young are inspired by Christian example to live Christian lives. But, taking this last thought with us, I am prompted to lead you still farther along the line of our text. There is a material life and there is a moral and spiritual life; two realms adjoining; and there are ways which take us from the one to the other. I suppose there is no experience more familiar to many of us than that of finding in some strong, true character the example and the instruction which leads us to noble striving. Hood, in speaking of Cromwell, says, "An age cannot move without its great men. They inspire it, they urge it forward. They are its priests and its prophets and its monarchs." All of which is but saying that the great man is the portal of promise and opportunity to the age in which he lives. His superior character furnishes the model, his superior genius provides the opportunity, for the development and advancement of the race. The progress of humanity has been continuously through these gates of pearl—these massive, resplendent lives which have sprung, clean-cut and beautiful, out of the conditions of their times. Even the unbeliever is one with us here. He admits the power of example, and the influence of the stronger soul. He says, "Yes, these are the gateways of character, these strong men and women standing all around us, and they help us to live better lives." Is it not strange that one who can believe all this does not go a step farther, does not stand in loving faith before Him who alone can give us entrance into the highest possible life, who hath said, "I am the door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Here is the gate of pearl which, swinging back upon its hinges reveals to us, and admits us to a life which the world knew nothing of before the Advent. The direct agency of God in bringing a soul through the portal of the new life we cannot explain. Regeneration is a Divine mystery, but it is none the less a Divine fact. But the going through the door, the passing

into a higher manhood and womanhood through Jesus Christ, the Elder Brother and Saviour, is something which we can understand. It is through Him that we are made meet for the kingdom of heaven. (C. A. Dickinson, M.A.)

Vers. 22, 23. I saw no temple therein.—*Heaven, without a temple; why?—1. A temple is a place set apart for the residence of a Deity. In heaven there is no temple, no particular place of worship. In Rev. vii. it is said, "they serve Him in His temple."* There heaven itself is the temple mentioned; here it is meant that no portion in particular could be styled the temple. 2. A temple is a place where particular rites are observed. In Deut. xii. 13, it was expressly commanded that no sacrifices should be offered but in the temple; elsewhere they would be a profanation. But in heaven no place was set apart for religious services; they might be offered in all parts alike. 3. A temple is a place where the worshippers resort at seasons for worship: three times a year the Israelites went up to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord from all parts of the holy land. In heaven there are no stated seasons of worship; no need to say there, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord": the inhabitants are everywhere and always engaged in the service and worship of God. 4. A temple is set apart from common uses for sacred exercises. In heaven there is no distinction between ordinary and religious employments. Lessons: 1. Those must be essentially disqualified for heaven who find no pleasure in devotion. 2. What a reason is here why we should improve the seasons of devotion, and especially these Sabbath opportunities of religious improvement! 3. Finally, how happy are those that love God and His service! (R. Hall, M.A.) *No temple in heaven:—*The explanation given of how this comes to be does not at the first satisfy us. We all know that in this world, to say that every day should be kept as a sabbath, comes to exactly the same thing as having no sabbath at all. Some of you will think how a certain eminent man, set free from work after many years of weary and uncongenial drudgery, said that he found that where all your time is holiday, there are no holidays. And yet this is all the comfort given us in the presence of the statement that in heaven there is no temple. We are told that there will be no temple in particular, because the place will be all temple. Now, the somewhat disappointed feeling that rises at the first glance at our text comes of our applying our common worldly ways of thinking to the better world—to a state of being that transcends our present thoughts. As we are now, it is only for short isolated times that we can be at our best in the matter of spiritual mood and holy feeling. But in heaven all this is changed. And it seems to me as if there were a sudden light cast upon the state of the redeemed, by the brief statement that as for heaven, the happiest and holiest place in all the universe, there is no temple there. You know, that statement might, standing by itself, read in either of two quite opposite ways. It might be the very worst, or the very best, account of the place of which it is written. "No temple there," might mean no care about religion at all. "No temple there," may mean that the whole place is one great temple; and that the whole life there is worship; and that the inhabitants are raised quite above all earthly imperfections, and above the need of those means which in this world are so necessary to keep grace in the soul alive. All temple would, with creatures like us, be equivalent to no temple at all. But with glorified souls, it means that they are always at their best: always holy and happy: always up to the mark of the noblest communion with their Saviour and their God! All this, however, is but one truth set out by this text. Let us now proceed to an entirely different view of it. It is something to remind us of the great fact that blest souls in heaven are lifted above the need of the means of grace. They have reached the end of all these; and accordingly the means are needed no more. You have got the good of them, indeed, but you do not need to use them now. They were very well in their time, but their time is gone by. Now, all the means of grace—God's house, with its praises, prayers, and exhortations, among the rest—are just as steps towards heaven. And when the soul has reached heaven their need is over. The church and its services are no more than the means, and when we can have the end without the means we may well be content. You know the scaffolding which the workmen use in building up some tall church spire may be very ingenious, may serve its purpose admirably well; but when the spire is finished you do not propose to keep the scaffolding up permanently. And the means of grace, all of them, and God's house with the others, are no more than as the scaffolding by whose means the soul is edified. And when the glorified soul has reached the highest attainments of Christian character, and has always

within reach the sublimest depths of Christian feeling and solid enjoyment—as it has in heaven—then the scaffolding by which it was built up to this may be taken down; the means of grace, so needful in their time, may be done without, may go. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *No temple in heaven*:—Our apostle's mind, then, had been Divinely enlarged until the old doctrinal methods of worship had begun to tell upon him with the power of a hindrance and limitation. This prophecy of a city without a temple, like all true prophecy, is the daughter of unrest. It is the attempted escape out of form of a mind or heart that feels strained by present limitations. Pressure, such as it discovers itself to be in our unrest, is the impulse outward of a mind that finds its immediate quarters too small for it, and so moves, or undertakes to move, into a house that is larger. As we grow we outgrow everything in the way of a mode and form of worship. Worship up to the time of Christ had centred in the temple at Jerusalem, a custom of Divine origin. Now, St. John had had that experience of the spiritual character of God that disclosed to him the utter incompatibility existing between true worship and any admixture of the building or house element; and because he realised that the temple and perfect worship are incompatible, he saw that there was sure to be a time when the temple would be everywhere, and it is thus explained to him. And this prophecy of his, like all true prophecy, is but the name we give to that power by which a Divinely quickened mind rises against those restraints by which its own thoughts and experiences have hitherto been bound. There is a very important purpose subserved in having the ideal disclosed to us, although not able to live by it. It gives us a direction like the polar star to the fugitive escaping towards freedom, and lays down a pathway along which we, too, may move in the direction of freer life. And the ideal is not only a distant line of guidance, but instructs by the power of contrast, for the brighter and purer it is the more startling the contrast in which the non-ideal is seen to stand to it. I would not try to trust myself, nor would I recommend it to the most spiritual-minded man or woman among you to trust yourself to any system of worship or method of religion that is not, in part, formal or methodical. The fact that some time we are going, we hope, to live in a city that has no temple, or will need none, has nothing to do with it. The fact that we already appreciate the incompatibility between stereotyped methods and places and religion has likewise nothing immediately to do with it. The great matter of spirituality is what must determine the moral and spiritual law that is to govern us. People in absenting themselves from the sanctuary are saying that, according to the words of the apostle, and even of the Lord Himself, sanctuary worship makes up no true part of religion. Well, neither is the shell the true part of the nut, and the nut will not always need the shell. The sanctuary and all its form and local appurtenances are not religion, but simply its encasement, its integument, and is not for its own sake, but for the sake of religion. When religion has become perfectly natural to us—that is to say, when it is just as natural for us to be religious as it is to be irreligious, when irreligion has become perfectly unnatural to us, and spiritual-mindedness a second instinct, and obedience to God has become spontaneous, and adoration before Him and the spirit of communion with Him works within us with the enforced facility of new genius—then, having become ideal men and able to live an ideal life, we need be amenable only to an ideal law. Just to the degree that we are dominated by the Divine Spirit, we are free from the obligations of the studied and the narrowed. But because religion is going to be a purely spiritual thing some time, or because there are those to whom it is mostly such now, that is not what it is to us, except as we are ourselves spiritualised. Counting the time, I believe, is no true ingredient of musical skill, but the fact that an accomplished musician can keep time without counting is no reason why the novice should omit doing so until he has so progressed that he can keep time without counting. As has been said before, the ideal has no relevancy to us any farther than we ourselves get in the range with the ideal, and become ourselves idealised. If we are ever competent to live in an untempled city, it will be because of our faithful use of the formal we have graduated out of the necessity of the formal, just as the grown man's ability to get along without parents to control him proceeds from the fidelity with which he conformed himself to parental instruction before he became a man. Fidelity to His sanctuary is God's appointed means of making us free from the necessity of the sanctuary, and forms faithfully observed, and methods loyally and devoutly adhered to, are so many appliances Divinely contrived for reinforcing human infirmity, and for the protection of the renewed spirit, till that spirit shall have reached such proportions of sanctity and

power and have become so instilled with the life of God—that is, shall be competent safely to determine for itself its own methods, and its expanded heavenly genius have become within it the secure law of its own individual spiritual life. (C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.) *No temple in heaven*.—He who witnessed the glorious vision recorded in this book had doubtless oft travelled from Galilee to Jerusalem to present himself before the Lord in the temple. He who had seen and rejoiced in the sight of the earthly Jerusalem had now a different scene opened before him. What would the earthly Jerusalem have been without its temple? A body without a soul, a world without a sun. In the world we have many institutions which are intended for good, but their very presence is an indication of evil. In going through the streets of a large city, you often find buildings, some of them like palaces, not intended for the rich and gay; but, it may be, for orphans, or destitute old men and women. What a blessed city that would be where there was no need of such institutions. And so is the absence of the temple the crowning glory of the Holy Jerusalem. That we may enter more into the meaning of the text, let us glance at the uses of the temple. 1. It was a meeting-place between God and His people. How grateful ought we to be that God has appointed to man meeting-places. Are we strengthened, enlivened, comforted, by meeting with fellow-Christians? If the temple and the church now be a place for such purposes, how is it that the absence of a temple in the heavenly Jerusalem is a mark of its perfection? The history of our earth tells, when there was no imperfection, no sin in the world, there was no temple; there was no need for it. A temple conveys the idea of limiting the worship of God to a set time and place; and not only that, but it reminds us of how many places there are where we seldom think of meeting with God. In heaven there is no temple, because it is not needed. There is no need of a meeting-place when God dwells among the inhabitants; no need of a temple, for we shall never be forgetful of Him; no need of getting our hearts anew enkindled with a devout and heavenly flame when every heart is full of love. 2. The temple a place of reconciliation. If two friends have quarrelled, how delightful to see them reconciled and walking together! But the very fact of your saying that they are reconciled shows that they have quarrelled. So it is in the church and in the temple. You cannot listen, you cannot look upon the ceremonies, without at once learning that man has quarrelled with God; that he has sinned against Him, and is now reconciled. But in the New Jerusalem there is no need of the symbol, or the words that tell man has been reconciled to God—brought back to God—for he is with God; what need of a place where friends should come to be reconciled, when they are reconciled already. (Jas. Aitken.) *And I saw no temple therein*.—I. THE SYMBOL OF THE DIVINE GLORY, WHICH WAS SEEN IN THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM, WILL BE EXCHANGED IN HEAVEN FOR THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST. There shall be no display of supernatural light there, such as dwelt in fearful majesty of old within the holy place of the temple; there shall be no symbol of mysterious glory, as in the ancient sanctuary, fitted and designed rather to veil the face of God than to reveal His character; the Almighty will not clothe and hide Himself, as in former days, with the impenetrable cloud, or the equally impenetrable brightness. But, without the intervention of any sign or symbol, or even outward representation, the living God shall be there seen as He is; the excellent glory that blazed between the cherubim as the representative of the Divine presence in ancient times will give place to the revealed form and the open face of Jehovah. II. THE SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS FOR SIN, WHICH FORMED A PRINCIPAL PART OF THE SERVICES OF THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM, WILL BE EXCHANGED IN HEAVEN FOR THE FAVOUR OF A RECONCILED GOD AND AN EXALTED REDEEMER. The sacrifice once presented on the Cross by the Son of God Himself has completely taken away the guilt of sin and the Divine wrath that was due to it. The one shedding of blood upon Calvary has perfectly done what the blood streaming upon a thousand altars, and shed by ten thousand victims, in former ages, could never accomplish. There shall be no temple in heaven, in respect that there shall be no need of sacrifice or shedding of blood there. But more than this. We are assured by the inspired apostle that, in the absence of any other temple, “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shall be the temple there”; and no small share of the happiness of the redeemed, as we learn from the passage before us, will be that, in exchange for the sacrifices and offerings presented for sin in the ancient temple, the saints of the Lord in heaven shall enjoy the favour of a reconciled God, and dwell in the presence of an exalted Saviour. And shall not the presence of the Lamb in the midst of heaven, the appearance of

the crucified Saviour in human form among the multitudes whom His blood has saved, lend to them an assurance of peace and safety, and complete acquittal from the guilt of sin, which cannot fail to swell their hearts with more than mortal gladness? III. THE IMPERFECT REVELATIONS PECULIAR TO THE ANCIENT TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM WILL BE SUPERSEDED IN THE CELESTIAL WORLD BY THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND THE REDEEMER. In this world of sin and imperfection the Christian sees only through a glass darkly. He sees, therefore, but in part, and he knows but in part. Mortal ears are not capable of hearing the accents of eternity; and there are sights there which could not be unveiled to mortal eyes. The angels of heaven "desire to look into them," and even they look in vain. And the redeemed of the Lord, when they break away from the confinement of their present condition and awoken to the vastness of their future lot, shall enter upon a state of existence in which new thoughts, new feelings, and new truths concerning God and concerning the Saviour, shall occupy and enlarge their souls throughout eternity. IV. THE PARTICULAR PLACES AND SEASONS, WHICH WERE PECULIAR TO THE DEVOTIONS OF THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM, WILL BE DONE AWAY WITH IN THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN. The many mansions of that celestial city will be alike pervaded by the glory of the Almighty, and alike sanctified and gladdened by it. The inhabitants of that kingdom, which is eternal in the heavens, will not have to wait the slow return of those annual seasons when His ancient people were invited to appear before God in Zion, and to hold fellowship with the Most High in His sanctuary; for their life will be a season of continual and endless fellowship with their Maker; and the day of glory which they shall spend in His presence—a day which has no morning and no night—will be one everlasting and uninterrupted Sabbath. (*J. Bannerman, D.D.*)

The perfection of the heavenly state :—I. THERE IS NO TEMPLE IN HELL. There is none for the devil. Here he has innumerable followers; and the Scriptures call him not only the prince of this world, to show that they are his subjects, but the god of this world, to show that they are his worshippers. There are days set apart for his honour, and places of worship open for his name. They will soon see him as he is—they will see what a wretch they have been serving here; how he has deceived them—how he has destroyed them; and, after having been their tempter, proving only their tormentor; and therefore Scripture says, "They shall look upward, and curse their king and their god." II. THERE IS NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

1. There is no idol temple there. 2. There is no temple there for heresies and error. 3. There is no party temple there. 4. There will be no material temple there. The reason is, because they will be unnecessary. They are now in the order of means, but then the end will be accomplished. III. NOW THERE ARE TEMPLES ON EARTH WHICH DESERVE OUR ATTACHMENT AND OUR RESPECT. 1. It is even possible for us to err now on the side of excess. We do this whenever we forget that their institutions and ceremonies are not to be regarded for their own sake. They are not ends, but means; they are not religion, but the instrumentalities of religion; and these temples, therefore, are not in all respects essential to religion even here. 2. We are more liable to err on the side of deficiency than of excess; and, therefore, having opposed formality which rests in temples, we must assail enthusiasm that would rise above them, and despise the things that are not necessary in eternity, though important and necessary here. Hereafter we shall live without food and without sleep; but what should we think of a man who affected to be spiritual enough to despise these vulgarities now, and to think that he could live without them? Let us take six views of man, each of which will show that, though our temples are to be dispensed with hereafter, yet that they are important and necessary now. (1) Let us view man physically. Let us look at his very constitution; at his nature. It was reserved for a philosopher of our own times to prove that the possessions of the most enlarged mind are from ideas originally admitted through the medium of the senses, or from contemplating the operation of our own minds acted upon by the medium of sensation. And what reason in the world have we to suppose that religion will not operate in the same way, and derive benefit from external things? Now God has acted all along upon the truth of Locke's principle, and He addresses us chiefly, in His word, by facts. The apostle spoke of those things which he had seen, and heard, and handled, of the good word of life. All the observances of Christianity are founded upon facts which interest and impress us entirely through the medium of sensation and reflection. (2) Let us view man as an immortal being, who has deep wants, and mysterious cravings, which distinguish from all the orders of inferior creatures, but rendering him the subject of hopes and fears which nothing earthly can remove or satisfy. It is only

the institutions of religion that can meet this hunger. (3) As a depraved being. Who can deny this? For what is the inference? If he be ignorant, he needs to be instructed; if he be wandering, he needs to be reclaimed; if he be careless, he requires to be aroused; if he be averse to duty, he stands in need of every address and motive that can excite him and influence him. Can religion be safely left to the choice and the disposition of such a being as this? (4) View man as a renewed being. Thus he is made to differ from others, and from himself. But though he be a changed creature now, he is not yet a glorified one. He is surrounded with numerous diversions and temptations; he abounds with much evil. Religion is indeed planted in him, but then it is an exotic, and a very tender one. Can religion be kept alive and flourishing in the soul without aid—constant aid? (5) View man in his civil being. Here you will meet with him among ranks and degrees of life, and these ranks and degrees of life are proper. The Scripture enforces an attention to them; no advantage is ever derived from the violation of them. But then it will be acknowledged that they may become excessive and injurious, and I ask what there is that can charm them, and sanctify them, like public worship, where the rich and the poor meet together, &c. (6) Let us view man publicly, in his connection with the State, for whose safety and for whose welfare he ought to be concerned. Now, if religion be essential to the safety and the welfare of a country, we contend that these institutions, and these observances, are essential to religion. And we would ask, What would any nation, what would any neighbourhood be, if the Sabbath, and if our temples were given up? How rude, how savage, how insubordinate, how insulting, are found those in the different parts of the country that are brought up away from the influence of the means of grace. (*W. Jay.*) *The heavenly temple* :—I. THE USE OF TEMPLES IN MAN'S PRESENT STATE. II. THE ABSENCE OF TEMPLES FROM MAN'S FUTURE STATE. What changes then must have passed upon our condition ere temples may be swept away without injury, nay, rather, with great benefit, to vital religion. It tells me there is no keeping of the earthly Sabbaths, for all its days alike are holiness to the Lord: and telling me this it also tells me that if once admitted within the gates of pearl, and privileged to tread the streets of gold, I shall be free from every remainder of corruption; I shall no longer need external ordinances to remind me of my allegiance, and strengthen me for conflict; but that, made equal to the angels, I shall love God without wavering, and serve God without weariness. It is, however, when we consider churches as the places in which we are to gain acquaintance with God, that we find most of interesting truth in the fact that there is no temple in heaven. Allowed not direct and immediate intercourse with God, we can now only avail ourselves of instituted means, and hope to obtain in the use of ordinances faint glimpses of that Being who withdraws Himself majestically from the searchings of His creatures. And we may not doubt that God shall everlastingly continue a mystery to all finite intelligences; so that we look not in the favoured expatiations of the future for perfect acquaintance with Deity. We rather take it as a self-evident truth, that God can be comprehensible by none other but God; and that consequently there will always be between the Creator and the created that immeasurable separation which forbids all approach to familiar inspection. But nevertheless we may not doubt that although God must be inscrutable even to the angel and the archangel, there are disclosures of Deity made to these illustrious orders of being such as we ourselves are neither permitted nor qualified to enjoy. The manifestation of Godhead in that to us unknown region which we designate heaven, and to those ranks of subsistences which we believe associated highest in the scale of creation, must be, we are sure, of that intenseness and that vividness which give to intercourse the character of direct and personal communion. To such manifestations we ourselves are privileged to expect admission. It shall not be needful in order to advance in acquaintance with the Deity, that the saints gather themselves into a material sanctuary, and hearken to the teaching of one of their brethren, and partake of sacramental elements. They can go to the fountain head, and therefore require not those channels through which living streams were before time transmitted. Present with the Lord, they need no emblem of his presence: faith having given place to sight, the apparatus of outward ordinances vanishes, like the shadows of the law when the substance had appeared. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The negative glory of heaven* :—I. IN THAT WORLD THERE IS NO SPECIALITY IN THE FORMS OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP. A city without a temple would strike the common notions of men as atheistic. To the Jewish mind especially it would give the idea of a city to be avoided and denounced.

Still, whatever might be the popular notions of men about temples, with their methods of worship: 1. Their existence implies spiritual blindness and imperfection, they are remedies for evils. 2. Their history shows that men, in many instances, have turned them to a most injurious account. They have nourished superstition; men have confined the idea of sacredness and worship and God to these buildings. They have nourished sectarianism. When it is said, therefore, that there is no temple in heaven, it does not mean that there will be no worship in heaven, but that there will be no temple like that on earth; always implying imperfections. The reason assigned for the non-existence of a temple in heaven is a very wonderful one, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." God and His Holy Son are not only the objects of heavenly worship, but the very temple of devotion. All there feel, not only that they have to render to God and His Son worship, but they are in them in the worship. II. IN THAT WORLD THERE IS NO NECESSITY FOR SECOND-HAND KNOWLEDGE. The fountain of all light is God Himself. He is the Father of lights. Here, like Job, we hear of God by the hearing of the ear, there we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him. He will be the light, the clear, direct, unbounded medium, through which we shall see ourselves, our fellow worshippers, and the universe. III. IN THAT WORLD THERE WILL BE NO APPREHENSION OF DANGER FROM ANY PART. "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there." No fear of temptation; here we are bound to watch and pray lest we fall into temptation. Why? Because of the greater amount of motive that now exists in heaven to bind the virtuous to virtue, the Christian to Christ, the godly to God. 1. There is a motive from the contrast between the present and the past. 2. There is the motive from the appearance of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There is no fear of affliction; we are told there "shall be no sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." IV. THAT IN THAT WORLD THERE WILL BE NONE OF THE INCONVENIENCES OF DARKNESS. "There shall be no night there." 1. Night interrupts our vision. It hides the world from our view, and is the symbol of ignorance. The world is full of existence and beauty, but night hides all. 2. Night interrupts our labour. We go forth unto our labour until the evening. V. THAT IN THAT WORLD THERE WILL BE NO ADMISSION OF IMPURITY OF ANY KIND. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (*Homilist.*)

The mission of the temple accomplished:—The first of these ideas is that of special local manifestations of God's presence and power. This idea was strongly suggested by the ancient Jewish temple, and particularly by the Shechinah which always blazed above the mercy-seat. It was the earthly palace of the heavenly King, where He held His earthly court. This temporary idea was necessary for the development of the human sense of the Divine presence on the earth, as the scaffolding is required for the construction of a building, or a ladder may be needed to reach the summit of a cliff. The spiritual sense of humanity was not sufficiently developed to see the glory of God everywhere and in everything, to behold every common bush afire with God. Only a great spiritual eye can read the name of God in the common everyday writing of human history. In order that men should see it at all it was necessary to write it here and there in great capitals. Just as a man pursuing his way in the midst of gathering electric forces may know nothing of them until the lightning flashes bright from the thick cloud, so men, as yet untrained to feel the invisible, would have become regardless, and perchance ignorant, of the Divine presence were it not for its special and pronounced manifestation in the "temple" and other holy places. The attempt to force men at once to recognise an equal Divine presence everywhere would have resulted in their not recognising it anywhere. In the interminable and pathless jungle of human life they would forget a God that might be present everywhere but was conspicuous nowhere. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.—*The God-enlightened city*:—I. The principal purpose here mentioned, for which the heavenly bodies were created, and for which we need them in this lower world is, TO GIVE LIGHT UPON THE EARTH. But agreeable and necessary as they are to us, the New Jerusalem needs them not for this purpose; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. The unfathomable flood of light and glory which unceasingly flows from the Father, is collected and concentrated in the person of His Son; for He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. Heaven is, therefore, illuminated not only with

God's glory, but with the brightness of His glory, with the most dazzling effulgence of Divine, uncreated light, a light which enlightens and cheers the soul as well as the body. Of the nature and degree of this light, who but the happy beings that enjoy it can form any conception? As the inhabitants of heaven will not need the light of created luminaries, so, we may add, they will no more need the assistance of human teachers, or of the means of grace. Little do they need human teachers, who know incomparably more of Divine things than all the prophets and apostles united knew, while here below. Little do they need the Bible, who have forever escaped all its threatenings, who are enjoying all its promises, who intuitively understand all its doctrines, and who have arrived at that heaven to which it points out the way. II. Another purpose for which God formed the sun was, we are told, TO DIVIDE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT. To creatures constituted as we are, the vicissitude of day and night, which is thus produced by the sun, is equally necessary and agreeable; and we ought ever to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness to which it is owing. Our bodies and our minds are soon fatigued, and indispensably require the refreshment of sleep. But we may easily perceive that it would be a great privilege to be freed from the necessity of sleeping, and especially from that subjection to weariness and fatigue which occasion the necessity. Do the rays of light grow weary in their flight from the sun? or does the thunder-bolt need to pause and seek refreshment in the midst of its career? As little do the inhabitants of heaven become weary in praising and enjoying God. As little do they need refreshment or repose; for their spiritual bodies will be far more active and refined than the purest light; and their labour itself will be the sweetest rest. III. Another purpose for which the heavenly bodies were created WAS TO SERVE FOR SIGNS, AND FOR THE REGULATION OF THE SEASONS. In this, as in other respects, they are eminently useful to a world like ours. The heat of the sun is no less necessary than its light; but the convenience and happiness of man require that this heat should be communicated to us in different degrees at different periods. But however necessary the celestial luminaries may be for signs and seasons on earth, they are needed for neither of these purposes by the inhabitants of heaven. They need no pole star to guide their rapid flight through the immeasurable ocean of ethereal space; for God, their sun, is everywhere, and where He is, there is heaven; there they are at home. They need no signs to warn them of approaching storms, or impending dangers; for they enjoy uninterrupted sunshine and perpetual peace. IV. Another purpose for which the heavenly bodies were created WAS TO SHOW THE FLIGHT, AND MARK THE DIVISIONS OF TIME. But though such divisions of time, as days and years, are thus necessary on earth, they will be perfectly needless to the inhabitants of heaven. With them, time has ended and eternity begun; and eternity neither needs, nor is capable of division. They know with the utmost certainty that their happiness will never, never end. Why then should they wish to know, what possible advantage could it be to them to know, at any given period, how many days or years had passed away since they arrived in heaven? (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The light of the New Jerusalem*.—I. IT IS PECULIAR LIGHT. There is none like it. Its blaze is not earthly. Yet it is truly light for men. It is Divine, but it is also human. All created and all uncreated brilliance is concentrated in it. The Man Christ Jesus is there. God over all is there. II. IT IS UNCHANGING LIGHT. He from whom it emanates is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Here there is no rising nor setting; no clouding nor eclipsing. III. IT IS FESTAL LIGHT. The feast is spread; the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. IV. IT IS ALL-PERVADING LIGHT. It is not confined to a few favoured dwellings; to one region of the city. The whole city shall be full of light. V. IT IS THE LIGHT OF LIFE. It is living light, life-giving light; not dead and inert like that of our sun, and moon, and stars, but living; instinct with life, and health, and immortality. It fills the whole man with life—body, soul, and spirit. VI. IT IS THE LIGHT OF LOVE. For that name, "the Lamb," contains within it the revelation of the love of God. That lamp, which is the Lamb, then must be love; its light must be the light of redeeming love. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Christ the light of heaven*.—I. WHAT CHRIST IS IN HEAVEN. He is the Son of Man, it says; for it calls Him "the Lamb," the same name that was applied to Him in His human nature on earth, and a name which will not admit of being applied to Him as the everlasting God. It involves in it an idea, not at variance with divinity, but yet quite foreign to it. Further, this name sets Him forth as retaining in heaven the marks of His sufferings on earth. This teaches us not only the blessed truth that we shall see in heaven the Saviour who bled for us, but that we shall see Him as

the Saviour who bled for us; we shall never look on Him without beholding in Him that which will remind us of His dying love. But again—our Lord is styled also in this text “the glory of God.” I say, our Lord is so styled, because it seems quite evident that the glory of God and the Lamb mean here one and the same object. The apostle evidently speaks as though by God and the Lamb he meant the same Person; as though he could not separate them in his mind; as though, in fact, they had been presented to him in this vision but as one object, and were but one object. And we are to infer more from this, than that the ascended Jesus is acknowledged in heaven to be God and Lord; we are warranted to infer that no other God or Lord is seen or thought of in heaven; and more also—that Christ’s human nature is as complete a manifestation of the Divine glory as even heaven itself can understand or bear. II. WHAT CHRIST IS TO HEAVEN. He is in it as the Son of Man, the once crucified Son of Man, the glory of God; He is to it a light, and all the light it has.” There are two ideas generally connected with the word “light” in Scripture, when used in a spiritual sense—one primary idea, knowledge, because light shows us things as they are; and then a secondary idea, joy, because a right knowledge of spiritual things imparts joy. When therefore we are told that there is light in heaven, that God dwells in light there, that the inheritance of the saints there is an inheritance in light, we are to understand that heaven is a world of knowledge, and such knowledge as gives rise to pleasure and joy; that we shall not lose our character as intellectual beings there; that our minds and understandings will go with us to heaven, and be called into exercise in heaven, and have everything brought before them that can expand, and elevate, and delight them. But whence is this knowledge to come? The text tells us. It traces it, observe, to the glorified Jesus as its source. God in Christ, it says, and in Christ as the Son of Man, is the author of it. “The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.” In this imperfect state of the Church, we need the sun and the moon, all the help we can obtain. We want the assistance of created things to impart knowledge and joy to us—Scriptures, and ministers, and sacraments, and ordinances. But not so in heaven. III. THE GREATNESS OF THIS HEAVENLY HAPPINESS. This is evidently the point to which the text is intended to bring us. Its design is to show us how much happier a world heaven is than earth, and how much happier the Church in heaven is than the Church on earth. It supposes, you observe, the Church to have some blessedness here. It has its sun and it has its moon, some sources of knowledge and joy, and these quite sufficient, not to meet its desires, but to answer the purposes of its present condition. But then it implies that these sink into nothing, when compared with the light which will shine on it, the knowledge and joy which will be imparted to it in the heavenly city. 1. The light that flows immediately from Christ in glory, is clearer and brighter than any other light can be. There is more of it, and what there is of it is of a purer nature. 2. The knowledge we shall have in heaven is not only more accurate than any we can attain here, it is a knowledge more easily acquired. How difficult do we sometimes find it now to lay hold of Divine truth! What a process we are obliged to pass through in order to arrive at a clear comprehension of the simplest truths of the gospel! Now in heaven a glance will teach you. Knowledge will flow like a stream into our minds, and bring happiness with it, and this every moment, and this for ever, without mixture, without interruption, without end. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The Lamb—the light*:—In that millennial state of which the text speaks, Jesus Christ is to be the light thereof, and all its glory is to proceed from Him; and if the text speaketh concerning heaven and the blessedness hereafter, all its light, and blessings, and glory, stream from Him: “The Lamb is the light thereof.” I. THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD. Jesus, in a millennial age, shall be the light and the glory of the city of the new Jerusalem. 1. Observe, then, that Jesus makes the light of the millennium, because His presence will be that which distinguishes that age from the present. That age is to be akin to paradise. It is true we have the presence of Christ in the Church now—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” We have the promise of His constant indwelling: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” But still that is vicariously by His Spirit, but soon He is to be personally with us. 2. The presence of Christ it is which will be the means of the peace of the age. In that sense Christ will be the light of it, for He is our peace. It will be through His presence that the lion shall eat straw like an ox, that the leopard shall lie down with the kid. 3. Again, Christ’s presence is to that period its special instruction. When He comes, superstition will not need an earnest testimony to confute it—it,

will hide its head. Idolatry will not need the missionary to preach against it—the idols He shall utterly abolish, and cast them to the moles and bats. 4. Once again, Christ will be the light of that period in the sense of being its glory. Think of the splendour of that time! Oh! to be present and to see Him in His own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords! II. THE STATE OF THE GLORIFIED IN HEAVEN ITSELF. “The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.” 1. The inhabitants of the better world are independent of creature comforts. We have no reason to believe that they daily pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Their bodies shall dwell in perpetual youth. They shall have no need of raiment; their white robes shall never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. 2. While in heaven, it is clear that the glorified are quite independent of creature aid, do not forget that they are entirely dependent for their joy upon Jesus Christ. He is their sole spiritual light. They have nothing else in heaven to give them perfect satisfaction but Himself. The language here used, “the Lamb is the light thereof,” may be read in two or three ways. By your patience, let us so read it. In heaven Jesus is the light in the sense of joy, for light is ever in Scripture the emblem of joy. Darkness betokens sorrow, but the rising of the sun indicates the return of holy joy. Christ is the joy of heaven. Another meaning of light in Scripture is knowledge. Ignorance is darkness. Oh! what manifestations of God there will be! Dark dealings of providence which you never understood before will then be seen without the light of a candle or of the sun. Many doctrines puzzled you; but there all will be simple. III. THE HEAVENLY MAN’S STATE MAY BE SET FORTH IN THESE WORDS. First, then, even on earth the heavenly man’s joy does not depend upon the creature. In a certain sense we can say to-day that “the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.” As we can do without these two most eminent creatures, so we can be happy without other earthly blessings. Our dear friends are very precious to us—we love our wife and children, our parents and our friends, but we do not need them. May God spare them to us! but if they were taken, it does not come to a matter of absolute need, for you know there is many a Christian who has been bereft of all, and he thought, as the props were taken away one after another, that he should die of very grief; but he did not die, his faith surmounted every wave, and he still rejoices in his God. We finish by observing that such a man, however, has great need of Christ—he cannot get on without Christ. We can do without light, without friendship, without life, but we cannot live without our Saviour. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The light of the city*:—“And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it.” The sun and the moon are obviously the symbols of earthly resources. It is not through the city’s sun and moon that God will flood her streets with the light of the jasper stone. It is not through the development of knowledge, the progress of thought, and the growth of the Arts, that God will raise city and State to an ideal condition. The impartation of God’s glory to the earth is not dependent upon sun and moon. “The city hath no need of the sun.” The “jasper” glory is obtained by direct communication with God. It is imparted immediately by the Divine Spirit to the spirit of man, and can only be received by spiritual trust and personal devotion. The “jasper” brightness will give new splendour to sun and moon, but the latter can never create the former. (John Thomas, M.A.)

Ver. 25. No night there.—*The everlasting day*:—I. No NATURAL NIGHT THERE. The large portion of our existence that sleep now consumes will be added to our peaceful, our blissful occupations. II. No NIGHT OF SIN THERE. III. No NIGHT OF SUFFERING THERE. IV. No NIGHT OF IGNORANCE THERE. V. No NIGHT OF INFIRMITIES THERE. VI. No NIGHT OF MYSTERIOUS PROVIDENCES THERE. VII. No NIGHT OF HINDERED PRAYERS THERE. VIII. No NIGHT OF DISAPPOINTED EXPECTATIONS THERE. IX. No NIGHT OF SEPARATION THERE. X. No NIGHT OF TEMPTATION THERE. (T. Nunns, M.A.) *No night there*:—In looking at the emblems employed in the Word of God, you cannot fail to be impressed with their simplicity as well as their beauty. Night is one of these. 1. It is the season of repose. 2. It is the time of evil—the season chosen for the performance of deeds of darkness and of sin. 3. And it is the time of fear. Yet notwithstanding all this I praise God for the night. 4. Night is suggestive of sorrow. This is the inevitable lot of the good on earth. But “there shall be no night” of sorrow “there!” No tears shall be shed, no hopes shall be frustrated, no disappointments felt, no friends removed, no graves opened. Night, as we have seen, is associated with

deeds of darkness. And hence, when it is affirmed of the heavenly state that "there shall be no night there," we are reminded of the perfect purity of our eternal home. Further, night is associated with weariness and fatigue. To affirm, therefore, of the heavenly world that there shall be no night there, is to declare that weariness and fatigue shall be unknown. One of the most difficult questions is that of the exact nature of the glorified body the redeemed will possess. And then, night is associated with obscurity. Its shades conceal much from our vision, and hence it has ever been regarded as an appropriate emblem of mental obscurity. Mystery surrounds us on every hand. Questions are continually arising to which we can return no complete answer. Now it is night with us. The unclouded day is yonder. (*S. D. Hillman, B.A.*)

No night there:—I. THE ABSENCE OF NIGHT IN THE GLORIFIED CHURCH IMPLIES THAT THERE WILL BE NO SIN THERE. II. THE ABSENCE OF NIGHT IMPLIES THERE SHALL BE NO IGNORANCE THERE. III. THE ABSENCE OF NIGHT IMPLIES THERE SHALL BE NO WEARINESS THERE. Here God's people are wearied with labours. IV. THE ABSENCE OF NIGHT IMPLIES THAT THERE SHALL BE NO CHANGE THERE. V. THE ABSENCE OF NIGHT IMPLIES THAT THERE SHALL BE NO DEATH THERE. (*B. W. Bucke, M.A.*)

The happiness of heaven:—I. THE IMPORT OF THE REPRESENTATION BY WHICH THIS STATE IS HERE DISTINGUISHED. 1. Among the mansions of the blessed, there shall be no fatigue, no tendency to lassitude, and no reason for repose. 2. There shall be no hostile intrusion there; there is no reason for precaution. 3. There is no impurity and no sin. 4. But night is a season of privation; and when we are told of heaven as a state where no privation shall be, we are well reminded that no night shall be there. Do you speak of privation of society? In heaven you will have delightful and hallowed fellowship. Do you speak of privation of knowledge? In heaven, illumination will be poured upon our faculties to the utmost extent which those faculties can, by possibility, bear. Do you speak of privation of happiness? In heaven, perturbation and pain, and fear, and distress, will be removed for ever. 5. "No more death"—"no more death" to our persons: "for this corruptible shall put on incorruption." "No more death" to our happiness; "no more death" to our attainments; "no more death" to our joy. All unchangeable, and all imperishable, and all for ever! II. THE CONCLUSIONS WHICH OUR CONTEMPLATIONS OF THE HEAVENLY STATE UNDER THIS REPRESENTATION OUGHT FORCIBLY TO IMPRESS UPON OUR MINDS. 1. Our contemplations ought to induce preparation. 2. Our contemplations of the heavenly state ought to induce gratitude. You were the slave led captive by the devil at his will, and now have been brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God—a liberty which is to be consummated in the skies. 3. These contemplations of the heavenly state should induce desire. And truly there is nothing—if we are preparing for such scenes as those which have now been laid before you—there is nothing which should keep your desires from heaven. (*J. Parsons.*)

Heaven without night:—1. We are wont to associate with night the idea of weariness. Sweet to the myriad toilers in the world's vast workshop is the coming of the still evening hour, when the tasks of day are laid aside, and tired limbs and overwrought brains draw refreshment from slumber. So benign is this provision that Scripture has included it among the special acts of Divine goodness, in the beautiful saying, "He giveth His beloved sleep." Now, as this arrangement is not found in heaven, the inference is obvious that the denizens of that bright realm do not require its operation, and are so constituted as to be inaccessible to fatigue from any intensity or duration of employment. 2. Night is the symbol of ignorance. How often do the Sacred Writers represent the intellectual and moral blindness of men under the figure of darkness! Thus Job, describing the errors and follies of the devotees of human wisdom, says, "They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope at noonday as in the night." And the fearful ignorance of God and of truth, which overspread the world at the period of the Redeemer's advent, is portrayed by the graphic declaration, "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." In this emblematic sense, a deep and cloudy night stretches over the sphere which we now inhabit. How imperfect are our faculties! How narrow the limits of our knowledge! How obscure and uncertain our researches! What barriers of gloom and mystery meet us on whatever side we attempt to push our investigations! But in heaven there will be no intellectual night. All the errors that now shade and darken our minds—all the obstacles which here impede and limit our acquisitions—shall there be for ever removed. The faculties of the soul which, amid the fogs and illusions of sense, are so restricted in their range, and so distorted in their

vision, will, in that radiant world, expand into seraphic strength, and under the beams of eternal day receive a new impulse, and a right direction. The veil also, which now hangs over so many departments of Truth, will then be lifted, and we shall enter her inmost temple, and worship at her most secret shrine. 3. Night is the symbol of sin. The time which God has ordained for rest, man has appropriated to crime. All classes of the depraved and lawless look upon night as their chosen patron and protector. "The way of the wicked is as darkness." "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." When, therefore, we read of heaven as being without night, the expression evidently implies that into those holy realms no impurity can ever be admitted. "There shall in no case enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." 4. Night is the symbol of danger. The hours in which darkness broods over the earth are peculiar for their insecurity. It is then that the robber, the housebreaker, the incendiary, and the whole tribe of depredators on property and life, steal from their lurking places, and roam abroad on their work of mischief. And then it is that perils easily avoided by day deepen and multiply their terrors. The exclusion of night from heaven may, therefore, be interpreted as a pledge that, in that secure asylum, no adversary shall assail us, and no possibility of evil ever menace our peace. The seductions of the world, and the treachery of our own hearts, will not follow us there, nor can Satan cross "the great gulf fixed" between hell and heaven to vex us with his assaults. 5. Night is the symbol of want. Sleep is the sister of death. During its reign over us, we retire within ourselves; the senses close their portals, and the soul is shut in from all its wonted delights. Communion with man and with Nature has ceased. Perception is suspended. Reason is in abeyance. Gone are consciousness, memory, hope. And even should slumber be interrupted, what a dreary blank does the eye behold! Hidden is the rich landscape—stream, and forest, and mountain—all the grand things and the lovely on which the daylight looks. Above us may glimmer the watching stars and the silvery moon, but they only awaken regret for the nobler luminary departed. So is it that night typifies want; and the fact that heaven knows no night is a most expressive sign that it also knows no privation. Want, in one or another of its forms, is inseparable from our earthly condition. Pilgrims in the desert, we must expect to sigh in vain for much that is essential to perfect felicity. But when we reach the land of Divinefulness above, every need will be supplied. Everything around us, every scene, every object, every employment, will be adapted to exclude disquietude, and to minister delight. Every faculty, every passion, will be absorbed in adoration, and overflowing with ecstasy. And He that sitteth on the throne will bring out His treasures to augment our bliss, showering down upon our spirits all the raptures which Almighty Goodness can bestow. 6. Night is the symbol of death. There are few analogies in the whole range of sacred imagery more suited to represent death than the season of night. And thus we find it very frequently employed by the inspired writers. The Psalmist, in speaking of the removal of his friends by death, says, "Mine acquaintance hast Thou put into darkness." Job calls death "the day of darkness," and the grave "the bed of darkness," "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Our Divine Teacher has also given us a very striking description of death under the figure of night. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh in which no man can work." To beings situated as we are, it is hardly possible to form an idea of a state of existence in which death is unknown. Yet this is true of heaven. "There shall be no more death." Oh, what a soul-ravishing announcement is this! No more death! Then hope has dawned on the midnight of the tomb; the King of Terrors is despoiled of his power, and the all-conqueror is himself conquered! No more death to our persons—no more death to our attainments—no more death to our usefulness—no more death to our joys! All are changeless and perfect. God is our portion, holiness our vesture, happiness our allotment, eternity our home. Oh, what a boon is Immortality when it thus stamps its own endless duration on all that awaits us in "the Better Land!" (*Dr. Ide.*) *The vision of the truth:*—I. NOW HERE IS SEEN THE VALUE OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE. The Man of Sorrows is on His march for the morning; for the principles of the passion place you on the track of the dawn. II. THESE PRINCIPLES ARE POWERS OF GUIDANCE IN THREE IMPORTANT—NAY, MOMENTOUS—QUESTIONS OF CONDUCT. 1. What is seriously necessary for any soul in order, in its mortal journey, to be useful and happy? The answer is—Not to

live at random, but to have an object in life. 2. What is to be my view of the world? What is the attitude of the soul of the Christian towards the mass of mankind? The optimist views it all through the medium of a rose-coloured dream. All is going onward as merry as a marriage-bell. The only objection is—theories do not alter human suffering, and to this theory facts do not square. It is impossible here reasonably to deny the darkness. It is true it is blessed to remember “there shall be no night there.” 3. There is here a revelation of the future. The eternal city is in fact the working out of the twofold Divine benediction. It is the completion and beatified result of purified characters. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way,” and “Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered.” This is the glorious end of innocence and penitence. The breaking of the dawn! It is coming, there is a land of brightness after darkness; amid all sorrow hope will yet have its triumph: “there shall be no night there”! III. NIGHT HERE, HOWEVER. WHY? From the absence of the sun: from the accumulation of the clouds. 1. There is sin. Wills opposed to the will of changeless goodness: wills almost fixed in evil—eyes from which all vision of brightness seems gone: hearts which seem to keep no trace of pity. Ah me!—a ruined soul, or a soul on the road to ruin, how terrible! To be growing worse instead of better: to be losing foothold, not climbing boldly on. Soul of a sinner! Pause, think twice. It is hard to imagine deliverance: hard to believe at times that God’s grace, that fresh breezes from the heavenly courts, can disperse such clouds, but it is true. Look up, march eastward; repent, cry for help, take heart; though the path be rough it is the path of the Holy Passion. The city of the saints is the land of the sunlight. “There shall be no night there.” 2. There is sorrow. Ah! who has ever read, who can ever read, the mystery of tears? But there it is. There is a home where no sorrow enters—there dwelleth no evil, “there is no night there.” 3. There is death. However it be lightened by the faith of a Christian, what thinking mind can fail to acknowledge there is the solemnity of night about the grave? Well, the dawn of eternity shall break, and death itself shall die. IV. THERE ARE MANY DIFFICULTIES, MANY SORROWS; YET ARE THERE NOT SOME ALLEVIATIONS? Life is never altogether darkness when it is illuminated by hope. Look upward, take courage, never allow the cowardice of permanent despondency, or the blasphemy of final despair. Trust God. Surely even here are streaks in the darkness. There are quiet hours of rest and blessing; such a converse with a dear friend; such a happy day of pleasure; such evidence that the sun is there, though veiled by the vapour; such approaches of the daylight; such streaks of the dawn. To repent, heartily, manfully, thoroughly, when you have sinned; to receive trial and sorrow with loving submission, and willingly to taste the sweet “uses of adversity”; to love goodness, truth, duty, God in Christ, and by the power, the moral power of love, to help and make men better—this, this, surely, whatever happens, is to plant your feet firmly on the track of the dawn. V. WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE? Well, John assures us that there lies before us something beyond all words happy, which he can only convey to us by speaking of it as “a city.” Remember that in that city you will find the result of your toil and the end of your journey. (*Canon Knox Little.*)

Ver. 27. *There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.—The barrier:—I. THE WORD OF EXCLUSION.* This is no arbitrary decree, it is a solemn declaration to which all holy spirits give their willing assent and consent; an ordinance of which even the excluded themselves shall admit the justice. 1. For, first, it is not meet that so royal and divine a corporation as the glorified Church of God should be ruined by defilement. God forbid that “her light, which is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal,” should ever be dimmed by the breath of sin. 2. There can be no entrance of evil into the kingdom of God, for it is the very essence of the bliss of the glorified Church that evil should be excluded. 3. Furthermore, consider that there is an impossibility of any sinful, unrenowned person ever entering into the body corporate of the glorified Church of God—an impossibility within the persons themselves. The sea cannot rest because it is the sea, and the sinner cannot be quiet because he is a sinner. 4. Our own hearts forbid that evil should so enter. You know how a few rags from the East have sometimes carried a plague into a city; and if you were standing at the quay when a plague-laden ship arrived you would cry, “Burn those rags; do anything with them, but do keep them away from the people. Bring not the pest into a vast city, where it may slay its thousands!” So do we cry, “Great God, forbid it that

anything that defileth should enter into Thy perfected Church! We cannot endure the thought thereof." II. THE WORD OF EXCLUSION WORKING WITHIN THE SOUL—within my soul, within yours. No person who defiles, no fallen spirit, or sinful man can enter. And as no person, so no tendency, leaning, inclination, or will to sin can gain admission. No wish, no desire, no hunger towards that which is unclean shall ever be found in the perfect city of God. Nor even a thought of evil can be conceived there, much less a sinful act performed. Nothing shall ever be done within those gates of pearl contrary to the perfect law, nor anything imagined in opposition to spotless holiness. Consider such purity, and wonder at it. It is altogether perfect! And, mark well, that no untruth can enter—"neither whatsoever maketh a lie." Nothing can enter heaven which is not real; nothing erroneous, mistaken, conceited, hollow, professional, pretentious, unsubstantial, can be smuggled through the gates. Only truth can dwell with the God of truth. Bethink you that not only does actual sin shut men out of heaven, but this text goes to the heart by reminding us that we have within us inbred sin, which would defile us speedily, even if we were now clean of positive transgression. How can you and I enter heaven while there is unholy anger in us? There shall in no wise enter into heaven a hasty temper, or a quick imperious spirit, or a malicious mind; for these defile. But then look at the other part of the difficulty—that is, the making of your own heart pure and clean. How shall this be done? Have you tried to master your temper? I hope you have. Have you managed it? Your tendencies this way or that, you have striven against them, I hope, but have you mastered them? I cannot overcome myself, nor overcome my sin. I will never cease from the task, God helping me, but apart from the Divine Spirit the task is as impossible as to make a world. III. THE WORD OF SALVATION, which just meets the difficulty raised by the sentence—"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." But, first, my past sin, what of that? "Washed in the blood of the Lamb!" This is our first great comfort, "He that believeth in Him is not condemned." But here is the point, there is still no entrance into the holy city so long as there are any evil tendencies within us. This is the work, this is the difficulty, and since these are to be overcome, how is the work to be done? Simple believing upon Christ brings you justification, but you want more than that; you need sanctification, the purgation of your nature. Faith in Christ tells us of something else beside the blood. There is a Divine Person—let us bow our heads and worship Him—the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father, and He it is who renews us in the spirit of our minds. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Heaven:—I. INTO HEAVEN SHALL ENTER NOTHING THAT DEFILETH. Every one, and everything whatsoever that is tainted with any impurity shall be utterly excluded. Not merely that eventually heaven will be cleared of such blemishes, but such shall never enter there. Absolute truthfulness and perfect purity, without any admixture of defilement at all, these are what God requires in all who cross the threshold of His home above. Better to be blind to the glory altogether than to gaze longingly upon it, if we must also gaze with despair on the forbidding regulation that those defiled, as we are, shall in no wise enter. II. This is true; but, God be thanked! it is not the whole truth. For, note—**THE LAMB WAS SLAIN TO CLEANSE THE DEFILED.** There would never have been found in heaven a "Lamb as it had been slain," unless it had been God's intention that some poor defiled creatures should get rid of their defilement and be found there too. We could not have climbed that frowning wall; we could not have burst through those glorious gates; a flaming sword of cherubims would have kept us, the defiled, from entering. But where Christ our atonement goes, there, clinging to His feet, we may go too. If He mounts to heaven, we may follow Him. If He sits upon the throne of God, there, too, our dwelling-place shall be. The transgressor may be sunk in the guiltiest pollution; but if in his distress he casts his sinful soul into the forgiving arms of the Redeemer, he shall surely be forgiven. Out of his great tribulation he shall come, and wash his robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore he, too, once defiled, and banished, and despairing, shall be found before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.

III. THOSE RECORDED IN CHRIST'S BOOK OF LIFE, AND WASHED IN HIS BLOOD, SHALL ENTER INTO LIFE. But we stand here in our pollution, full of abomination, and falsehood, and defilement. The antagonism is frightful, the exclusion complete. But the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and His blood cleanseth from all sin. In that fountain, "whosoever will" may wash and be clean. Being justified by faith he has peace with God. The Holy One will regenerate and sanctify his soul. (*T. M. Herbert,*

M.A.) The impassable gulf:—The other day our Australian colonists were urging us on to what might have been a very formidable struggle with France. They pleaded, and that justly, that it was almost fatal to the well-being and security of the communities on the east coast of Australia that France should have its convict station in such close proximity. Men steeped in triple murders and every unnatural abomination made their way across from New Caledonia from time to time to a colony planted with fair and virtuous homes. Of course we all sympathised with the colonists; we should resent the existence of a passable gulf between our homes and culprits of that sort. If by an income tax of sixpence in the pound we could make the strip of sea an impassable gulf, we should all be ready to do it. When a man has passed penitent into eternity, his sin is just as much an abomination to the God of light and the children of light as the crime of the French convict is to us. How is it that we sympathise with the colonist, but question God's right in fixing this impassable gulf? Had He no right to protect His children in their new home? Heaven would be no heaven if the proud Pharisee could come sweeping by, wounding some poor saint of God at every step, and seeking to press God's emancipated sufferers into new serfdoms. (*T. G. Selby.*) *Future punishment retributive*:—I wonder that men should have such faith in the reformatory effect of punishment. When we call to mind that forty-five per cent. of the convictions in our police courts are the convictions of people who have been sentenced before, and that ninety-five per cent. of sentences to penal servitude are passed upon people who have previously had an acquaintance with the pains and rigours of prison life, it does not seem very reasonable to hope much from the reformatory tendency of the punishment that will overtake the wicked beyond the grave. (*Ibid.*) *The Lamb's book of life*.—*The Heavenly Church Book*:—**I. THE REGISTER.** The Infinite One must know everything—what it is, where it is; its nature, character, and uses. But it is not said that there is an indiscriminate register for all, but simply for the holy and true. Not for the wicked. Are you enrolled in that book among the saints? If in Christ, you are, you must be—no one can keep you out of it. If not in Christ, you must be out of it, and no one can put you in. **II. THE REGISTRAR.** “The Lamb's book.” The Book of Life must be the most difficult to keep. What wisdom—discrimination and justice are required! The combined intelligence of heaven and earth could not keep it; even archangels would make mistakes, but the “Lamb” cannot. Think of His high qualifications. His wisdom is perfect, His omniscience unfailing, His justice unsullied, and His love deep and eternal. **III. THE REGISTERED.** To be in that book is to be safe. To be there is to have heaven for an eternal possession. To be there, is to be among the highest and the best. What honour can be comparable with this? (*Homilist.*) *The heavenly register*:—**I. THE BOOK** referred to—1. The book of life. 2. The Lamb's book. (1) As the author of life. (2) As the Head of the Church. (3) As the final Judge. **II. THE NAMES** recorded—1. Repentant sinners. 2. Living believers. 3. Sanctified disciples. Of all ages—countries—dispensations—conditions. **III. THE PRIVILEGES** of the registered. 1. Divine honour. 2. Divine riches. 3. Every good. 4. Heavenly glory. Conclusion: The subject should produce—1. Unspeakable joy. 2. Entire confidence. 3. Holy circumspection. 4. Fidelity and obedient perseverance. (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

VER. 1. A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.—*The life river*:—**I. IT IS A RIVER OF HEAVEN.** They that drink of it must drink immortality and love. “It is the river of God.” **II. IT IS A RIVER OF GRACE.** It flows from the throne of the Lamb; and everything that has connection with the Lamb is necessarily of grace. **III. IT IS A RIVER OF POWER.** It comes from the throne—the throne of God; and therefore possessing the properties of that throne. It communicates power into the soul of every one that drinks, or even that walks along its banks. The power and authority of God are in it; for it issues from the fountainhead of universal power. **IV. A RIVER OF PURITY.** “A pure river of water of life!” Like the Lamb from whose throne it comes, who is without blemish, and without spot! Like the city through which it flows, into which nothing that defileth shall

enter! As it pours its heavenly waters on us now, it purifies. V. A RIVER OF LIFE. Whosoever the river cometh it quickeneth (Ezek. xlvii. 9). Each drop is life-giving; it contains everlasting life, for the Spirit of life is in that river. VI. A RIVER OF BRIGHTNESS. The words "clear as crystal" should be "bright as crystal"—the same word as in ver. 16, "the bright and morning star." It is a river of splendour, Divine and heavenly splendour. (H. Bonar, D.D.) *The river of life: or the spiritual enjoyments of the heavenly life*.—I. THE SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE ARE ABUNDANT IN THEIR MEASURE. "And He showed me a pure river." Great cities are generally built on the banks of rivers to ensure health, commerce, and pleasure. The spread of the Gospel is sometimes set forth under the emblem of a river (Ezek. xvii. 1; Hab. ii. 14; Psa. xvi. 4). Here, however, we have the spiritual enjoyment of redeemed and glorified humanity imaged forth. St. John did not see a brook, or a well, but a river flowing from the great Throne. The spiritual enjoyments of heaven are not scanty. On this river the richest products will be borne to glorified humanity. II. THE SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE ARE PURE IN THEIR NATURE. "Pure"—"Clear as crystal." Are we to judge of the purity of water by its cleansing properties? Then none so pure as this which flows from the Throne of God, as it can purify the unclean soul. It can wash out sins of the deepest dye from the garments of the moral nature, and make them white as no fuller on earth can whiten them; hence, the faultless multitude before the throne. III. THE SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE ARE INVIGORATING IN THEIR ENERGY. "Water of life." This great river of heaven is not sluggish in its flow, but quick and rapid. It gives life and verdure wherever it comes. The things of earth are dead and barren, but when touched by the influence and grace of the Divine Spirit they teem with vitality. But the life of the soul now is nothing in intensity as compared with what it will be when it attains the enjoyment of heaven. Then it will become possessed of an immortal vitality which shall know no decay or decline. IV. THE SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE WILL ETERNALLY MEET THE NEEDS OF THE HUMAN SOUL. The thirsty there have a river at which they can drink, and which will never be exhausted. The Divine gifts in heaven will be adapted to the requirements of our renewed and glorified natures. Thus the soul will be made glad. V. THE SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE ARE THE OUTCOME OF THE SOVEREIGN MERCY OF GOD. "Out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb." And so all the spiritual enjoyments of heaven, in abundance, in purity, in life, in satisfaction, and in perpetuity will be the outcome of the Sovereign Grace of God as exercised through and manifested in the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. Lessons: 1. That we should prize the ordinances through which the water of life is conveyed to men. 2. Contemplate the active spiritual enjoyment of the good. (J. S. Ezell, M.A.) *Divine love a river*.—I. EXHAUSTLESS. It rises from the infinitude of the Divine nature—a source unfathomable. II. UNIVERSAL. This river rolls everywhere. It rolls under the universe: and all things float on its waves. It refreshes and beautifies all. III. EVER FLOWING. The inexhaustible fountain is always active, outpouring itself. Creation is a work never finished, for the river of Divine love is overflowing. IV. RESTORATIVE. It at once resuscitates and cleanses: it quenches thirst and removes defilement. Christ is the channel through which flows this soul-restorative love. (Homilist.) *Christianity a transcendental system*.—I. It is transcendental in its VALUE. What on earth is of such worth as water? But what is the character of this water? 1. It is a "river"—not a stagnant pool, a sleeping lake, or a purling brook; but a river, profound in depth, majestic in volume, resistless in movement. 2. It is a "pure" river. How pure is Christianity! How holy its morals, how morally perfect its leading character—Christ! 3. It is a pure river of life. 4. It is a pure river of life that is transparent. "Clear as crystal." II. It is transcendental in its ORIGIN. 1. It proceeds from "the throne"—the centre of universal authority. Christianity is a code rather than a creed, more regulative than speculative. 2. It proceeds from the "throne of God." Christianity is a Divine system; its congruity with all collateral history, with our moral intuitions, with all our *à priori* notions of a God, proves its Divinity. 3. It proceeds from the "throne of God and of the Lamb." Christ has to do with it. Conclusion: Such is the gospel. Value this river. Kind Heaven, speed the course of this river! May it penetrate every region of the world, and roll its waves of life through every heart! (Homilist.) *Heaven*.—I. WHEREIN THE GLORIFIED LIFE IN HEAVEN WILL BE SIMILAR TO, AND

WHEREIN IT WILL DIFFER FROM, SPIRITUAL LIFE ON EARTH. 1. The first truth that meets us in this passage is, that the influences which will sustain the future life in heaven are described in precisely the same figurative language as that used by our Lord and the inspired writers in relation to the spiritual life on earth. That which John saw flowing in the midst of the street from its perennial source in the throne of God and the Lamb was a river of "water" of life. This is exactly the language used in Scripture to indicate the powers and influences which sustain the spiritual man in this world. Isaiah invites men to partake of spiritual blessings in the words: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Jeremiah thus laments over the unfaithfulness of the Jews: "For my people have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." We are clearly taught, therefore, by this vision of the apostle, that while the outward condition of the life in heaven will be vastly changed, the weak and sinful body giving place to one like the glorified body of Christ—yet the life itself will be the same. We shall then continue to be what we begin to be now. Heavenly life, in its deepest and inmost reality, is begun on earth. As, in the unopened bud, there are in microscopic form all that will afterwards expand into the flower; as, in the child, there are all the incipient faculties that will afterwards develop into the full power and maturity of manhood; so with man as a spiritual being. Grace is the infancy of glory, and glory is the manhood of grace. Natural death, which, when seen from the human side, appears an overwhelming catastrophe, can have no power over that life—it only separates the germ from the material husk in which it has been enclosed. 2. As then the future life will be a continuation under changed conditions of the life we possess now, it follows not only that present experience must in its measure be the only true interpretation of the future, but, further, the glory of that future life reflects light back upon the present. It becomes us not only to fix our hopes upon the blessings yet in reserve, but to prize highly those we have already received. While we think of heaven as the one hope of the present life, let us learn to set more value on and use more diligently the grace which sovereign mercy has already bestowed. II. WHEREIN THE GLORIFIED LIFE IN HEAVEN WILL DIFFER FROM SPIRITUAL LIFE ON EARTH. 1. Observe, as the first special characteristic of this water of life, that it flows in a river, at once suggesting the idea of unfailing abundance. Our great rivers never become dry. Generations of men are born and perform their part in life and then die, while the rivers of which they drank, and beside which they built their cities, remain the same. Some, like the Nile, have been flowing from long before historic times. "Men may come, and men may go, but they flow on for ever." And the blessings that will be given in the future to sustain the spiritual life of the believer are here symbolised by a river of water of life, denoting certainly, among other things, that in heaven there will be an unfailing abundance of whatever is necessary to sustain the life and growth of the spiritual nature. No pressing need will ever darken the brightness of that Divine home, or promote the decay of spiritual vigour. The river flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. Its source is perennial. Sooner shall all the powers of the universe fail; sooner shall God Himself cease to be God, than the fountains from which spiritual blessings flow become dry or empty. 2. Observe, as a second point, that John saw the river of water of life flowing in the midst of the street. To understand the symbolism here, we must remember that the street is the place where men meet together, where they pursue their varied occupations. And the golden undefiled street of the New Jerusalem represents the scene of the common activities of the life there. And the position of the river flowing in the midst of the street teaches the truth that whatever the occupations may be, there will be nothing in them antagonistic to the highest interests of the spiritual life. Now the street is the scene of care and toil. Here on earth it is the place where temptations have to be met, where sin assaults and wickedness displays itself. No river of water of life flows in the midst of our streets, but rather the waters of ungodliness and iniquity. The man who longs for communion with God does not go into the open highways of human traffic to find strength and peace: he goes, rather, into his closet. He must put the world outside in order to pray for the lessening of the power of the world within. But in heaven fellowship with God will need neither abstraction nor privacy. Every occupation will harmonise with the highest aspirations of man's renewed nature. All outward

things will perfectly accord with and promote the well-being of his spirit. 3. Observe, further, John speaks in the most emphatic manner of the purity of that river. "A pure river of water of life clear as crystal." Spiritual influences, the truth that enlightens, the Divine grace that quickens and sustains the spirit, are in themselves always pure. But how continually on earth they become dimmed and weakened by mixing with what is human and worldly! How strangely truth becomes mixed with error, and Divine influences marred and weakened by human passions and prejudices! What man can maintain that he has received and holds only the truth? that he has made no mistakes? that in him the grace of God is unmarred by any human weaknesses or by any contrary affections? But in heaven the river of water of life is "pure, clear as crystal"; it has no admixture of error or imperfection; it has never become adulterated by inferior elements. 4. Then observe, as a last point, this vision of John teaches that in heaven faith will give place to sight. John "saw the river of water of life proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb." How much of unbelief and misbelief mingles with the strongest faith on earth! How insidiously doubts creep into our minds and rob them of their joyful confidence! There are times when our fear suggests that the ground of our faith is slipping away from beneath our feet. But those who will drink of that pure stream will behold the source whence it comes; they will have no need of faith, and they will have no temptation to doubt. Every joy will be permeated and intensified by a sense of blessed certainty that it is the true gift of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. (*W. H. King.*) *The river of life:—*

I. ITS SOURCE. II. ITS PROGRESS. III. ITS PROPERTIES. 1. Living. "Water of life" (John iv. 10). 2. Pure (Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Eph. iv. 30). 3. Bright. "Clear as crystal." Radiant with light. Illuminating. IV. ITS EFFECTS. 1. Quickening (Ezek. xlvi. 9; John iv. 14; John vii. 37–39). 2. Beautifying (Isa. xxxv. 1, 6, 7; Isa. lviii. 11). 3. Fructifying (Rev. xxii. 12; Jer. xvii. 8; Psa. i. 3; Isa. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17). (*E. H. Hopkins.*) *Gleaming as crystal*.—If we are to understand the New Jerusalem properly, we almost need to have been citizens of the old. Observe, then, that the ancient Jerusalem was not situated, as most cities, on the banks of some river, or the shore of some sea. It stood in a peculiar position, at some distance from either: it was badly watered; we read of a pool or two, of a little brook, of an aqueduct and some other artificial water-structures. Bearing this fact in mind, you will understand how forcible an appeal to the imagination would be contained in the verse of the 46th Psalm, which tells of a river that should "make glad the city of God." In evidence of the foregoing you may notice the following remark of Philo on the verse quoted: "The holy city, which exists at present, in which also the holy temple is established, is at a great distance from any sea or river, so that it is clear that the writer here means figuratively to speak of some other city than the visible city of God." It is evident, therefore, that the mention of a pure, fresh stream flowing through the midst of Jerusalem was a figure of a very striking nature; and we say that the basis of this magnificent description in the Apocalypse lies in the insufficiency of the water supply of the ancient city. The life of the future, and by that we mean heaven on earth as well as heaven, shall be as different from that which you are now realising as the water supply of Jerusalem would be if a river flowed in the midst, from what it is now with merely Kidron and Bethesda and Siloam and Solomon's Pools. 1. It is not a standstill life: no one can stand still who lives with God. There must be fresh discoveries of truth and duty every day; and fresh inquisition made into the heights and depths of Redeeming Love. Abandonment to God must mean advancement in God. 2. Neither in earth nor in heaven is the life to be an intermittent one. There should be no such word as "revival" in the dictionary of the Christian Church: we want "life," not "revival." You hear people saying of certain religious movings—"They are having quite a revival"; alas! and were they dead before? Indeed, I am sure this intermittent fountain expresses only too accurately the lives of many of us. The best that God can do with us is to make us an occasional blessing—a sorrowful thing to confess when there are suffering ones around waiting and watching the surface of our hearts to see whether there is any moving of the water. 3. It is not a life for which the world is too strong, and which cannot therefore be kept pure. It is not figured by a little brook, as Kidron, defiled with all the impurities of a city, and that an Oriental city. And yet how many lives there are of which we have to say, "The world is too strong for them"; well-intentioned people, but feeble in grace, and who have received but little of the Life of God. 4.

It is not a humanly-devised life, as Solomon's aqueducts. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The Divine Life is not sect, and it is not system. The channel of a sect! it is a pipe that bursts when the tide of life rises beyond a certain point. The channel of a system! it is an aqueduct through which, if one stone be taken out, the water ceases to reach you. If one travels on the continent, one can see (I think it is at Avignon) the ruins of the ancient Roman aqueduct; but the Rhine and the rest of the rivers of God flow on still, full of water. 5. Finally, we may say, that the Life is one of absolute dependence, and is conditioned on the sovereignty of God and of the Lamb. Grace and the Holy Ghost are the portions of the dependent soul: they only flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. (*J. Rendel Harris.*)

The throne of God and of the Lamb.—*The coronation of the Lamb*:—Regarding here the mere grammar of the words, we have a partnership Deity presented. But the matter I have now in hand is not the plurality encountered, but the name; to trace the ascending progress, issued in the final coronation, of the Lamb. The ascending stages of this progress we shall best discover if we glance at the Scripture record of the story. The word "lamb" begins of course at the creature, and the creature required, first of all, to be created, having just the qualities of innocence, inoffensiveness, incapacity of resentment and ill-nature, ready submissiveness to wrong, necessary to the intended meaning, and the finally sacred uses, of the word. Lambs of nature were first-stage symbols, for the due unfolding of the Lamb of religion. Then follows, we may see, a process in which artificial meanings are woven into and about the words and images provided, by the religious uses of sacrifice; for God is now to be displayed in the dear passivities of sacrifice. Abel. Sacrifice of Isaac. Passover (Isa. lii. and liii.). At last the fulness of time is come; when a strange new prophet appears, announcing the kingdom of God now at hand. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Now at last the advances and preparations of so many ages are ended, the Lamb of God is come. And then what does He Himself do, three years after, when He encounters the two disciples going back, heavy-hearted, into the country, but open to them all the ancient scripture, showing out of it how certainly Christ ought to suffer, and so to be the Lamb of prophecy. And what does He give them to see, in this manner, but that all sacrifice and passover are now fulfilled forever in His Divine passion? Then, passing on a stage farther, we are completely certified in our impressions, by the discovery that, at this same Lamb and passover blood, all apostolic preaching begins. God's new gospel of life is the revelation of the Lamb. For this, says Philip to the eunuch, is the prophet's "lamb that was dumb before His shearers." And this, says Peter, is "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1. What does it signify, that God has now the Lamb throned with Him, but that He is now to be more and more distinctly conceived as a susceptible being; to be great, not as being absolute, or an infinite force, not as being impassive—a rock, a sea, a storm, a fire—but as having great sentiments, sympathies and sensibilities. Nothing has been so difficult for men as to think of God in this manner. The human soul is overborne, at first and for long ages, by the statural dimensions of God; filling up this idea with mere quantities; putting omnipotence in the foreground, and making Him a grand positivity of force; adding omniscience, or absolutely intuitive knowledge, adding also will, purpose, arbitrary predestination, decrees: exalting justice, not as right or rectitude, but as the fearful attribute of redress, that backs up laws regarded mainly as rescripts of will in God, and not as principles. He has always been at work to mend this defect in us; protesting by His prophets, in the matter of His sensibilities, that He is "hurt," "offended," "weary," "was grieved forty years," that "in the affliction of His people He was afflicted, and bare and carried them all the days of old." All this in words to little or no effect; but now He shows us in the Lamb, as the crowning fact of revelation, that He is a God in moral sensibility—able to suffer wrong, bear enemies, gentle Himself to violence, reigning thus in what is none the less a kingdom, that it is the kingdom and patience of Jesus. Physical suffering is of course excluded by the fact of His infinite sufficiency, but that is a matter quite insignificant for Him, compared with His moral suffering. Under such conceptions of God we of course approach the great matter of atonement, in a wholly different predisposition. We shall look for something that belongs to the Lamb, something in the nature of suffering patience, and sorrow. What we call grace, forgiveness, mercy, is not something elaborated after God is God, by transactional work before Him, but it is

what belongs to His inmost nature set forth and revealed to us by the Lamb, in joint supremacy. 2. God's nature itself is relational to both sin and redemption. Sometimes we begin to imagine that the sense of sin is likely, as things are just now going, to quite die out. No, the Lamb is in the throne, and it is impossible henceforth, that a God unrelational to sin, or a fate unbeneficently relational, should ever be accepted by the settled faith of the world. Simply to think the supreme eminence there of the Lamb is to look on Him we have pierced, and see Him rising higher and yet higher, age upon age, and feel the arrows that were hid in His sorrows growing even more pungently sharp in our guilty sensibility. All the more resistless too will be the stabs of bad conviction, that they are meant to be salutary, and are in fact the surgery of a faithful healing power. We are also shown by this revelation of the Lamb in the throne, and shall more and more distinctly see, that the nature of God is, in like manner, relational to redemption. The two points, in fact, go together and are verified by the same evidence. It is not for one moment to be imagined that Christ the Lamb has somehow softened God and made Him better. He came down from God as the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, and the gospel He gave us is called the everlasting gospel, because it has been everlastingly in God, and will everlastingly be. God's nature is so far relational to redemption, that His glorious possibilities are bleeding always into the bosom of evil. There is a fixed necessity of blood, and He has the everlasting fountain of it in His Lambhood. So that condemnation for evil, or sin, is not a whit more sure to follow than forgiveness, sweetened by self-propitiation. 3. Having the Lamb now in the throne, it will be more and more clear to men's thoughts that God's most difficult and really most potent acts of administration are from the tenderly enduring capacity of His goodness, represented by the Lamb. The richness and patience of His feeling nature, in one word His dispositions, are the all-dominating powers of His reign. What He is in the Lamb—determines what He is and does universally. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *The throne of God and of the Lamb*:—I. "BEHOLD THE LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look at Him in the dawn of His ministry, when first He comes within the range of mortal vision—a man, a lowly man, one chosen out of the people. He lived and He died in the presence of many witnesses: what further evidence could be desired that Jesus was a man and not a myth, a lamb-like man, and none of your pretenders to greatness? His character, too, is so purely natural that the example of excellence He sets needs no explanation. How lamb-like He is! Thus you see the Lamb of God among men: will you track His footsteps still farther on till He becomes the Lamb of sacrifice, and actually takes the sin of man upon Himself, that He may bear its penalty? II. BEHOLD THE THRONE. Let us see it first from the Lamb's side of it. Of course there is only one throne: God and the Lamb are not divided. The Lamb is God, and the interests of God and the Lamb are one. Acknowledging the oneness of the throne, we proceed to inspect it from the point of view in which the Lamb chiefly challenges our notice. You will remember that He is portrayed to us as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." The midst of the throne means the front of the throne, according to the Greek. The Lamb was not on the throne in that vision, but standing immediately before it. That is a position in which our Lord Jesus Christ would have us see Him. To the awful throne of God there could be no access except through a mediator. The throne of heaven is the throne of God and of the Lamb. His dominion over nature always appears to me a delightful contemplation. Lord of all the realms of life and death, His providence runs without knot or break through all the tangled skeins of time. All events, obvious or obscure, great or small, are subject to His influence, and fostered or frustrated by His supremacy. The Lord reigneth, and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. Well, that is the aspect of the throne from the side of the Lamb. Let us now take another look and behold the throne of God. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. The throne of God, if we view it as sinners, with a sense of guilt upon our conscience, is an object of terror, a place to fly from. Henceforth eternal praises to His name, the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. It is a throne of righteousness, but no less a throne of grace. There, on the throne of the Almighty, mercy reigns. According to the merit of the sacrifice and the virtue of the atonement all the statutes and decrees of the kingdom of heaven are issued. The altar and the throne have become identical. One fact remains to be noticed—it is this: the throne of God and of the Lamb is in heaven. We must pass beyond this earthly region, and join the company of those

who people the celestial realm before we can see the throne of God, so as to obtain a complete view of it. Is not this among the chief joys of heaven? What hallowed communion with Him we shall there enjoy. In His Church below He has given us some pleasant foretaste of His sweet converse; but there the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall always feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 2. *The tree of life.*—*The tree of life:*—As we gradually are being drawn nearer and nearer to the end, and the sentence of death which has been passed upon us becomes more imminent, have we yet tasted of the tree of life? Ah, we shall be asked before we enter paradise again, not what riches we have, not what knowledge, not what intelligence, but what life? whether our soul is alive unto God? Oh, when hundreds and hundreds are tasting of the tree of knowledge, when the world is so clever, so eager, so wicked, would that more tasted of the tree of life, of religion, of holiness! And the tree of life is accessible to all; multiplied it stands on each side of the river, in the wilderness, and in the promised land. There is an open church, and an open Bible, and open privileges for every one. And there is fruit to be found on that tree for all, not only for the good, but twelve manner of fruits: fruit for this hard, weary life, fruit for the tempted, fruit for the penitent, fruit for the occupied, fruit for every one. And for those who despise the fruit there are the leaves. Yes, the very outskirts of religion are blessed; yes, even to linger in these courts, to hear the voice of God speaking in the psalms, "To go with the multitude, and bring them forth into the house of God"; even in the scanty service, the cold devotion, the imperfect knowledge, there is a leaf from the tree of life; there may be healing in it. It was such a leaf from this tree that healed the fevered soul of St. Augustine, fluttering to his feet charged with power and virtue. Many an old wound has been healed over by the buried leaves of early training; many a chance word which has winged its way from the Bible, or some good book or sermon, has proved to be a leaf from the tree of life. Ah, yes, if you need healing, if you are full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, if you shrink from the fruit, still there is healing in the leaves. In the very outskirts of religion there is healing, but not satisfaction. Medicine is not food, but also food must sometimes be preceded by medicine. (*Canon Newbolt.*) *The tree of life:*—

I. *THE TREE OF LIFE BEARS FRUIT.* "Twelve"—symbol of plenty. "Every month"—symbol of constancy. The tree of life is never without plenty of fruit. Every man can find in the Cross of Christ the particular blessing that will suit his need.

II. *THE TREE OF LIFE IS THE PURIFIER OF THE WORLD.* Does not the Cross of Christ heal the nations? Does it not turn evil into good, and change curses into blessings, and so maintain the balance of the moral world? We know how the story of the Cross, by its unselfish teachings, its spiritual influences, its pure precepts, its noble principles, has laid hold of nations, countries, and empires; how it has changed them gradually, powerfully, successfully; how it has lifted them up from superstition and corruption into the sweet light of culture and purity; how it has consolidated them and made them powers for good in God's world. III. *THE TREE OF LIFE IS OUR PROTECTION.* (*J. G. Davies.*) *The tree of life:*—In the Authorised Version it is not easy to understand the statement that "in the midst of the street and on either side of the river was the tree of life"; but by dividing the sentence after the word "street," as is done in the Revised Version, all is made easy to understand.

You have the picture of the river of water of life running down in the midst of the street; then on each side of this central stream you have a row of trees; and these trees are all described as "the tree of life." In the history of Genesis the tree of life appears to be spoken of as one single tree; it was an exotic there; only one specimen in the whole garden; but in the new paradise which St. John saw, it would seem to have grown abundantly; "on either side of the river" does not admit of the supposition of one single tree; the word tree must be generic; as we say that the apple-tree abounds in Devonshire, or that the vine flourishes in France, meaning that Devonshire is a land of apple-trees, and France of vines. Hence I have spoken of a row of trees on each side of the river; there could not be less than one row, there might be several. Next observe what is said about the "twelve manner of fruits." Those of you who have visited countries where the orange-tree grows will understand the description at once: you will remember to have seen the ripe oranges, the small green fruit, and perhaps the blossom, all flourishing together: "three manner of fruits." Multiply this by a process of heavenly arithmetic, and you have St. John's picture of the tree of life bearing fruit in twelve

different degrees of maturity; the number twelve corresponding to the months of the year. So that the tree has ripe fruit all the year round; no long winter of sterility; no anxious spring with tender leaves and delicate blossoms, and fears concerning east winds and late frosts; no calm decay of autumn, after the fruit has been gathered and is gone; not this, but perpetual sunshine above, perpetual supply to the roots of living water below, and so a perpetual bearing of fruit for the support of human souls. Putting Genesis and Revelation together, I think we may draw the conclusion that in some sense the tree of life is ever necessary to the human soul. You find it in paradise, you find it in heaven; it flourishes in the first creation of God, it flourishes still more abundantly in that new creation which St. John saw in his vision. We may safely conclude that if in two such different creations the tree of life was a prominent feature of God's work, it cannot be absent from any intermediate dispensation, or at all events that it is ill with the world, when access to the tree of life is forbidden. May it not be said that if access to the tree of life is that which man lost when, in his wilfulness, he determined to eat of that other tree, then a renewed access to the tree of life is just that which Christ has gained for humanity by His Incarnation, by His Cross and Passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost? May we not say that the vision of the tree of life, which St. John saw in all its heavenly luxuriance and completeness, is the true consummation of all that God does for human souls upon earth by the means of grace, which for Christ's sake He supplies? There is one other view of the subject which I should like to bring before you. It is scarcely possible to speak of the tree of life without thinking of the antithesis of the tree of knowledge. I observe that one of our publishers has adopted as his colophon a picture of two trees bound together by a scroll which carries the legend, "*Arbor Scientiæ, Arbor Vitæ*" (The Tree of Knowledge, the Tree of Life). If it be meant by this that there should be alliance and harmony between human knowledge and that knowledge which is life eternal, I think the motto is a good one and true. But it must be an alliance and harmony, not an identification or a confusion of one with the other. "Knowledge is power," according to a well-known aphorism, but knowledge is not life. And therefore it is impossible to think upon the tree of life without thinking upon that other tree; the tree of knowledge bears fruit which is beautiful to the eye and good for food, and in man's present condition the fruit is not forbidden, but it cannot take the place of the fruit of the tree of life; he who eats of it will hunger again; he who eats of the fruit of the tree of life will hunger no more, but will have part in the eternal life of God. (*Bp. Harvey Goodwin.*) *A tree:—*Look at this tree in three aspects. I. AS CENTRALLY ROOTED—"In the midst of the street of it." Christianity is a life well rooted and well guarded—an incorruptible seed, that "liveth and abideth for ever." II. It is ESSENTIALLY VITAL. It is "the tree of life." Life of all kinds, even vegetable and animal, is, say men of science, inextinguishable. This is true of this spiritual life—this life of Christianity in the soul. III. It is MARVELLOUSLY FRUITFUL—"Which bare twelve manner of fruits." How abundantly fertile is living Christianity in the soul! What new thoughts, affections, resolves, are constantly evolved. IV. It is ALWAYS SEASONABLE; yielding its fruit every month. The fruits of living Christianity in the soul are always seasonable. V. It is UNIVERSALLY HEALING—"The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Twelve manner of fruits.**—*The tree of life shaking his fruits and leaves among the nations:—*I. SPEAK A LITTLE OF CHRIST UNDER THE NOTION OF THE TREE OF LIFE. 1. Some general remarks concerning this blessed tree here spoken of. (1) Such metaphorical descriptions of Christ are very common and familiar to the Spirit of God in Scripture. (2) Christ is a tree of His Father's planting (John xv. 1). (3) This tree of life, in His first planting and budding, He is small, but His latter end doth greatly increase. (4) This tree of life, after He had flourished awhile in this lower world, was cut down by the sword of Divine justice (Isa. liii. 8). (5) Although this tree of life was cut down unto death by the hand of justice, yet death could not long keep his dominion over the tree of life. (6) He doth now in His exalted state excel all the trees of the wood (Cant. ii. 3). (7) This tree of life, though He be now exalted far above the heavens, yet His branches bow and bend down to the earth in the dispensation of the Word. 2. Why He is called, in a way of eminency, "the tree of life." (1) Because He is the original and fountain cause of our life both spiritual and eternal. (2) He is the material cause of our life. It is the very life of Jesus that is in the soul of the believer (Gal. ii. 20). (3) He is the purchaser of our life, and so He is the meritorious cause of life.

(4) He is the preserving cause of our life; He maintains and holds our souls in life by continual supplies and communications. (5) He is the final cause of our life. As He is the original, so He is the end of our life, "For none of us liveth to himself," &c. (Rom. xiv. 7, 8). 3. What sort of life springs out of this tree of life. (1) There is a life of justification in opposition to legal death. (2) A life of sanctification or of holiness. This is the fruit and consequent of the former. (3) A life of consolation or comfort, for He is "the consolation of Israel." (4) A life of glory grows out of the tree of life. 4. A few properties or qualities of this life that springs out of the tree of life. (1) It is a Divine life; it is the life of God in the soul. (2) It is of all others the most excellent life. (3) It is a royal and a princely life. (4) It is a heavenly life. (5) It is a growing life. (6) It is an immortal, durable, and everlasting life. II. THE SITUATION OF THIS TREE IN THE CITY OF GOD. 1. The city spoken of is none other than the Church of God. 2. This city has streets in it. By the street, I understand the ordinances of Divine appointment, especially these of a public nature. 3. Notice here, that there is a river, which is said to run through the midst of the city, and in the streets of it, according to what we have (Psa. xlv. 4). By this river, the whole city of God, all true believers, are refreshed, supplied, fructified, cleansed, and quickened. 4. Christ, the tree of life, is on each side of the river, and in the midst of the street of it. (1) A living Redeemer, though He be in heaven exalted at "the right hand of the Majesty on high," yet still He is to be found by His people upon earth; yea, He is in every part of His Church. (2) Christ is the centre of His Church and people; for He is here said to be in the midst of the city: as the heart is in the midst of the body, so Christ is in the midst of His Church. (3) The tree of life, being in the midst of the street, says that Christ is a common and public good unto the Church, that He is set up for the benefit of all the inhabitants. As every subject in Britain may say of our present sovereign, He is my king, because he is set as a public good to the whole body politic; and as every soldier of an army may say of the principal commander, He is my general, in a way of application, and have recourse to him as such; so Christ, being the common Saviour of sinners, the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church by office, every one may, in a way of particular application, claim the benefit of Him in His saving offices. (4) They who would find Christ must seek Him in the streets and broad ways of gospel ordinances. (5) Christ is to be met with, not only in public ordinances of the Church, but that sweet fellowship with Him is to be had also in the more private retirements of the Lord's people; for here the tree of life is not only in the street, but on each side of the river, through all parts of the city. (6) The influences of the Spirit are absolutely necessary, in order to the sweetening of ordinances, and conveying the fruit of a Redeemer's purchase to them in the use of ordinances; for here the pure river of the water of life, it intermingles itself in the streets of the city, with the spreading boughs and branches of the tree. (7) Christ is the ornament of His Church and people; for the tree of life is here spoken of as the ornament of the city in the midst of its streets. (8) The whole city, and every one of its inhabitants, dwell or abide under the shadow of the tree; for the tree is on every side, and in the midst of the street. III. THE FERTILITY OR FRUITFULNESS OF THIS TREE OF LIFE; it bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month. 1. Some of the fruits of the tree of life. (1) Let us take a view, and not only a view, but a tasting of the fruits of His death. (a) It is by His death that an angry God is atoned and reconciled. (b) The debt-bond that justice had against us is torn; the hand-writing that was contrary to us is cancelled (Col. ii. 14). (c) Everlasting righteousness is brought in when it was quite out of the world. (d) By His death the covenant is confirmed with many (Dan. ix. 27). (2) Let us view some of the fruits of this tree of life, in His resurrection, when He sprang out of the grave. (a) The quickening and raising up of the soul that was dead in sin is a fruit of the resurrection of the tree of life. (b) Another fruit of His resurrection is the discharging of our debt that we were owing to Divine justice. (c) Another fruit of the tree of life in His resurrection is the reviving of our hopes of recovering the lost inheritance (1 Peter i. 3, 4). (d) Our victory over sin and death is secured. (3) Let us view and taste of the fruits of His ascension unto heaven. (a) The leading captivity captive (Eph. iv. 8). (b) The conferring of ministerial gifts upon men, yea, the very office of the ministry and ordinances of the gospel for the edification of His mystical body (Eph. iv. 8). (c) The downpouring of the Spirit in a more plentiful measure than under the Old Testament dispensation. Of this Christ Himself speaks (John xvi. 7). (d) The preparing of heavenly mansions for us, where we may be with Him for ever, is a

fruit of the exaltation of Christ (John xiv. 3). The head being above, the body shall follow. (4) Let us view and taste the fruits of His intercession, which are great, glorious, and lovely. (a) Freedom from, and strength against, temptation (Luke xxii. 31, 32). (b) Boldness and confidence toward God, and acceptance at His throne (Heb. iv. 16). (c) Through Christ's intercession we have a ready answer unto all challenges and accusations that are brought in against us. (d) The assurance of the effectual application of all the benefits of His purchase and legacies of His testament is a fruit of His intercession. (e) The hearing of our prayers, the acceptance of our persons and weak services, is another fruit of His intercession.

2. Some of the months wherein He yields fruit to the souls of His people. (1) There are some of them summer months. (a) There is the spring month, or time of conversion, or effectual calling; the tree of life yields fruit then to the soul. (b) There is the pleasant summer month of manifestations and discoveries of the Divine glory of the Lord's countenance. (c) There is the pleasant and sweet summer month of access to God in duties and ordinances. (d) There is the pleasant month or season of remarkable deliverances that the Lord works for His people either from spiritual or temporal enemies. (e) There is the pleasant month of the renewed or lively actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ or on the covenant and promises. (f) There is the month of a lively love to the lovely Jesus. This is a pleasant summer month in which the soul feeds liberally on the fruit of the tree of life. (2) As there are summer, so there are winter months, in which the tree of life yields His fruit. (a) There is the sharp, piercing winter month of conviction, reproofs, and challenges from the Lord. (b) There is the dark and weary winter month of desertion. (c) There is the weary winter month of the prevalency of indwelling corruption, when the soul is crying, "Iniquities prevail against me: O wretched man that I am," &c. (d) There is the heartless winter month of deadness, dullness, and barrenness. This is another melancholy, weary month. (e) There is the stormy month of inward and outward trouble. (f) There is the melancholy and gloomy month of death.

IV. THE MEDICINAL QUALITY OF THE TREE OF LIFE; HIS VERY LEAVES ARE FOR THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS.

1. Whom are we to understand by the nations? I answer, All that ever sprung of Adam, every creature endued with a reasonable soul, whether of Jew or Gentile.

2. What diseases do the nations labour under which make them need the healing leaves of this blessed tree to be brought unto them? Answer in general, ever since the fall of Adam the whole nations of the earth have been just like a great hospital of diseased persons overrun with a loathsome leprosy. And if you still ask me What is to be understood by the diseases of the nations? In a word, it is just the disease of a depraved nature venting itself in all manner of sin and wickedness (Eph. ii. 1-3; 1 Cor. vi. 9-11; Rom. i. 21, 22).

3. What are we to understand by the leaves that are for the healing of the nations? The expression imports that everything in Christ is useful and beneficial. I conceive that by the leaves of the tree, which have a healing virtue upon the nations, we are in a particular manner to understand the doctrines, promises, histories of His holy Word, by which the knowledge of Christ and faith in Christ is wrought among the nations of the earth (Psa. cvii. 20).

4. How doth it appear that this tree and the leaves of it are for the healing of the nations. (1) It appears from Scripture prophecy. Jacob upon his deathbed foretold that the gathering of the nations should be unto the blessed Shiloh. So likewise, in Isa. xi. 10, we have a prophecy to the same purpose. (2) It appears from Scripture promises, particularly the promises made to Abraham, "In thee," i.e., in thy seed, viz., in Christ, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Psa. lxxii. 17). (3) It appears from the commission given unto the apostles of Christ after His resurrection (Matt. xxviii. 19). (4) It appears from the obedience that the apostles of Christ yielded unto this commission. (5) It is evident from the actual healing of many among the Gentile nations by the leaves of this blessed tree.

V. THE APPLICATION. 1. The first use shall be in a few inferences from the whole. (1) From what has been said about this tree of life we may see that paradise is again opened and regained for us by the second Adam to great advantage. (2) See what a glorious and excellent society the Church of God is, even the Church militant, which is but a faint emblem of what the Church triumphant will be. (3) See hence what a glorious, excellent, sufficient, and suitable Saviour Christ is; He is the tree of life, the fountain of life, in whom all our well-springs are. (4) See what excellent persons believers are. Why, they are the branches and twigs of the tree of life. (5) See hence the excellency of the gospel, which makes a discovery of the tree of life, and brings His fruit and leaves to the

nations of the earth. (6) See, from what has been said, the necessity and excellency of the grace of faith. Why, the tree of life, though it be growing in the midst of our streets, yet cannot be discerned without faith. (7) See hence the necessity of the Spirit, in order to the application of Christ; for the river waters the whole city, and conveys the fruits of the tree of life. (8) See hence how inexcusable unbelief is, and how justly they perish who remain in unbelief within the bosom of the visible Church where Christ is preached. 2. The second use of this doctrine shall be by way of trial and examination. (1) Has the life of the tree of life ever entered into thy soul? (2) Have you been overshadowed with the spreading branches of this tree of life? for, as you heard, the tree of life extends its branches to every corner of the city. Now can you say with the spouse (Cant. ii. 3)? (3) Have any of the streams of the river, which run under and among the branches of the tree of life, flowed in upon thy soul? My meaning is, Has the Spirit of Christ entered into thy soul? (4) What think ye of the fruits of the tree of life? for, as you heard, He bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month. Can you say with the spouse that you not only "sat down under His shadow with great delight, but His fruit was sweet to your taste"? (5) What healing or medicinal virtue have you found in the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations? (6) When you get leave by faith to feed upon His fruit and to apply His leaves, you will just think yourselves in paradise, yea, in a better paradise than Adam was in when in the Garden of Eden. Oh, it will be the very pleasure of your life and the joy of your heart to be viewing the pleasant tree of life and to be rejoicing, now and then plucking of his fruit in the streets or ordinances of His appointment. 3. The third use of this doctrine shall be of exhortation. (1) Unto all in general. Oh, sirs, will ye come to the tree of life, for the gates of paradise are opened again. (a) Consider what life is to be had by coming to this tree of life; a life of justification, sanctification, consolation, and of eternal glory; a Divine life, a royal life, a heavenly life, a growing life, an immortal life; all which I spoke to in the doctrinal part. (b) Consider what an excellent defence thou shalt find under the shadow of this tree. Here thou shalt find a defence—(i.) Against the wrath of an angry God, who is a consuming fire. (ii.) Against the rage of Satan. (iii.) From the fury of men. (c) Consider the excellent qualities of the fruit of the tree of life. (i.) It is pleasant fruit, sweet to the taste (Cant. ii. 3). (ii.) It is profitable fruit; it "cheereth the heart of God and man." (iii.) It is plentiful fruit. Come and eat thy fill, even to satiety; nothing will be missed, the tree is laden. (iv.) There is variety of fruits in this tree. Some fruit-trees they bear plenty of one kind of fruits; but here is the excellency of this tree, that it has twelve manner of fruits—fruits of all sorts—adapted to the necessity of the soul. (v.) The fruits of the tree of life are permanent and perennial, always continuing; for it brings forth fruit every month, every season. (vi.) It is nourishing fruit. By the fruit of this tree the soul is made to grow, and "go from strength to strength, until it appear before the Lord in Zion." (d) Take a view of the leaves of the tree, and let this invite you to come to it in a way of believing. (i.) Art thou a blind sinner? Well, here is a leaf of the tree suited unto thy disease (Psa. cxlvi. 8; Rev. iii. 18). (ii.) Art thou deaf that thou cannot hear the voice of God in His Word or rod? Well, here is a leaf of the tree of life for healing thy disease (Isa. xxxv. 5). (iii.) Art thou a lame sinner that cannot walk in the Lord's way? Here is a leaf for thee (Isa. xxxv. 6). (iv.) Art thou a dumb sinner that thou cannot speak a word in the matters of God, cannot pray, nor praise? Well, here is a leaf for thy disease (Isa. xxxv. 6). (e) Consider that as the tree of life is calculate to thy necessity, so it is ordained for thy use and for the use of every sinner that will make use of it by faith (John iii. 14–16). He is given to us (Isa. ix. 6). (f) Consider that this tree is accessible; for He is in the midst of the street. And though He be highly exalted and lifted up above the heavens, yet His boughs stoop and bend down to the very ground that the hand of faith may reach His fruits and leaves (Rom. x. 6–8). (g) You are not only invited but commanded to eat the fruit and apply the leaves of the tree by faith. This is the very work of God which He requires of you—"This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." (h) You will die except you eat of the fruit of the tree of life (John viii. 24). (*R. Erskine.*) **Leaves . . . for the healing of the nations.**—*Healing leaves*:—I. IN REFERENCE TO HEAVEN. 1. The heavenly city is described as having an abundance of all manner of delights. 2. As everything good is present, our text hints that nothing ill is there. 3. It is in heaven, according to our text, again, that there grows the tree which is not only health to heaven, but which brings healing

to the nations here below. II. IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES BELOW. 1. All the nations are sick. All the nations need healing, our own among them. Do not iniquities abound? Go to the West End and see its fashionable sin, or to the East End and see its more open wickedness. And all individuals in every nation want healing. The evil is in our nature from the very beginning. 2. There is but one cure for the nations—the leaves of the tree. 3. Jesus is pictured here as a blessed tree whose leaves heal the nations. Now the point of the text is this, that the very leaves are healing, from which I gather that the least thing about Christ is healing. The least fragment of this sovereign remedy has omnipotence in it. We may also learn that the humblest and most timid faith in Jesus Christ will save. Pluck a leaf of this tree by thy poor trembling faith and it shall make thee whole. Beloved, after we have been saved from our sin by faith in Jesus Christ it is very wonderful how everything about Christ will help to cleanse. Study His example; it will exercise a curative power over you. You will be ashamed to be selfish, you will be ashamed to be idle, you will be ashamed to be proud when you see what Jesus was. If we take His precepts, and I hope we prize them as highly as we do His doctrines, there is not a command of our Lord but what possesses a sacred power, by the application of the Holy Spirit, to cure some fault or other of our character. Do thou as He bids thee, and thou shalt be made whole. His least words are better than the best of others. 4. Then, too, this medicine heals all sorts of diseases. The text puts it, “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” It does not say of this or that malady, but teaches us that the medicine is universal in its curative power. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Healing leaves*.—I. THE DISEASE OF THE NATIONS. 1. It is universal; affects the whole race. 2. It is deep rooted. Not a surface disease; not an accidental, but a constitutional disease. 3. It exposes man to the displeasure of God. 4. It is the source of all the misery and wretchedness of man. II. THE REMEDY SUPPLIED. III. THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY. (*W. D. Ingham.*)

Vers. 3, 4. And there shall be no more curse.—*The curse abolished*.—I. THE ABSENCE OF ALL CURSE AND MALEDICTION: “And there shall be no more curse.” How much is contained in this description of that state, negatively, in the absence of all evil! 1. The curse pronounced after the first transgression. But in the state and time here foreshown, all this will be happily reversed. 2. The curse upon individual persons. Thus it fell upon Cain: Gen. iv. 11. But there shall be no more of this curse, for there shall be no murderer then or there. 3. The curse has fallen upon cities for their wickedness and impiety. Thus was Jericho devoted to destruction. But this curse shall be no more; for there shall be no iniquity, and so no devastation, neither shall there be any Achan, any one to trouble God’s Israel, and bring a curse upon himself and it, by coveting any forbidden thing. 4. Nations also have been accursed, as Israel (Mal. iii. 9; Isa. xliii. 27, 28; Dan. ix. 11). And how long and grievous has that curse been! how bitter that cup which they have drained! But the time is coming when the blessing shall come upon them as it is promised them (Mal. iii. 12; Zeph. iii. 15; Jer. xxxi. 40). 5. One of the three great portions of the family of man—the descendants of Ham, the third son of Noah, these were accursed: Gen. ix. 25. And how awfully has this curse been fulfilled! What hundreds of thousands of our fellow-creatures are held in the grievous bonds of slavery! But then there shall be no more hard bondage, no cruel taskmasters, no more severing of the nearest and dearest ties. 6. There was the curse of the sinful confederacy of Babel. But in the world to come there shall be one heart and one tongue. 7. All flesh has incurred the curse of the transgression of God’s law (Gal. iii. 10). This, in the unbelieving and impenitent, who do not receive and obey the gospel, ends in that most woful, final, and irreversible curse (Matt. xxv. 41). But in the happy state predicted in the text, there shall be no more transgression. The law will be written in indelible characters upon the heart. 8. The Son of God was made a curse (Gal. iii. 13). But in heaven He suffers no more curse. How great the change! 9. Some, under the pressure of affliction, have cursed the day of their birth. Thus Job’s (Job iii. 1), and Jeremiah (Jer. xx. 14). But in the world to come there shall be no affliction to cause such bitter and passionate feeling. Now Job and Jeremiah bless God that ever they were born. 10. Satan, through Balak and Balaam, sought to curse the people of God (Numb. xxiii. 7). But in the world to come Satan will not be there, nor Balaam with diabolical counsel to seduce the righteous into sin. 11. A solemn curse is uttered against all corrupters

of the gospel of Christ (Gal. i. 9). But in the world to come the gospel can be darkened and perverted no more. Then it will be seen in all its effulgence and blessedness. 12. Equally solemn is the curse upon all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xvi. 22). But will there be any in that world who do not love Christ—any who do not worship Him? Not one (chap. v. 13). II. THE PRESENCE OF THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB. 1. The abiding presence of God. 2. The glorious presence of God. 3. The glorious presence of God in His redeeming love. For it is “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” III. THE EXALTED PRIVILEGES OF GOD’S SERVANTS. 1. “And His servants shall serve Him.”

(1) Perfectly, without sin. (2) Powerfully, without weariness. (3) Continually, without intermission or end. 2. “And they shall see His face.” (1) All present instrumentalities for the knowledge of God and communion with Him, will be done away. (2) All present views of God will be infinitely transcended. 3. “And His name shall be in their foreheads.” It denotes visibility of relation to God, that we are His servants and children, and that God is not ashamed of us, but will own, acknowledge, and glory in us. The mark of our belonging to Him shall be no secret mark, but open and conspicuous, as the graving of “Holiness to the Lord” on Aaron’s mitre. (J. T. Parker, M.A.) *The negative happiness of the saints in heaven* :—I. WHO THE PERSONS ARE WHO SHALL BE THUS HIGHLY FAVOURED.

1. They have been called by the Word and convinced by the Spirit of sin, of unbelief (John xvi. 9); have been deeply affected on account of it, and alarmed for the consequences (Acts xvi. 30). 2. They have received Christ in the gospel by a lively faith, through which their freedom from the curse is begun in this life (John v. 24; Gal. iii. 13). 3. They love Christ, and consequently are delivered from the dreadful anathemas (1 Cor. xvi. 22). 4. It is their care and endeavour, as a fruit of this love to Christ, to give sincere, universal, and constant obedience to His commandments (Rev. xxii. 14). 5. They consider it as heaven to be where God and His Christ are, to serve Him, and to enjoy Him for ever (Phil. i. 23). 6. They are careful to maintain good works, particularly works of charity, towards the members of Jesus Christ (Matt. xxv. 34–41). II. THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHO

SHALL BE THUS HIGHLY FAVOURED. 1. There will be no more sin in such, or ever done by them, to occasion any curse: they are the just made perfect (Heb. xii. 23). 2. There will be no more wrath in God to inflict any curse: once He was angry with them on account of sin (Isa. xii. 1; Psa. xxxviii. 3), but it shall not be so any more (Ezek. xvi. 42). 3. There will be no more sentence passed against them including a curse. Once they were subject to that tremendous sentence (Gal. iii. 10), but never shall any more (John v. 24). 4. Security against every degree of separation from God (Rev. iii. 12). 5. Exemption from all the evils of afflictions and sufferings which are so common here (Isa. xxxv. 10). 6. There shall be no person who is a curse or is accursed among the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. III. WHENCE IT IS THAT THEY ARE THUS BLESSED. 1. The love of God the Father is the original cause. 2. The death of Christ is the meritorious cause. 3. The Holy Ghost, with His gracious influences, is the efficient cause (Gal. iii. 13, 14; 2 Cor. v. 5; Psa. cxliii. 10).

CONCLUSION: 1. How pleasing are the prospects of the real Christian as to a future state! 2. How dreadful the future of the finally impenitent! (T. Hannam.) *The curse abolished* :—I. THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE. In the New Jerusalem the deliverance of the believer from the curse shall be complete. No streak of gloom shall mar the brightness of joy’s perfect day. All sin shall be shut out, and therefore also all penal consequences of sin. What a great word of salvation is this! Would you seek to realise somewhat the depth of meaning in it? Look abroad at the widespread spectacle of the world’s wretchedness. In the New Jerusalem all that shall have come to an end. There shall be no more cruel oppressions, no more the desolation of war, no more the ravages of famine and plague, no more “distress of nations,” no more blighted homes and scathed hearts. But look into your own hearts. Each child of God has enough in his own experience to teach him the meaning of the curse, and the blessedness of the deliverance given when “there shall be no more curse.” Every carking care and gloomy fear, all suffering and all sorrow, constitute parts of the same great curse for sin; and all, from whatsoever cause they spring, the child of God shall shake off in glory. The heavy load of toil, poverty, the hindering body, and death will be done away. Again, the curse of vanity, which weareth out all things, shall, in the New Jerusalem, have worn out itself. On earth, and under the curse, every promise falsifies itself, and every hope deceives (Jer. xvii. 5). Nothing that springs from the root of the flesh ever comes to fruit,

but in apples of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah. Fruitlessness, vanity, is the most malignant power of the curse; it is a worm gnawing at the root of all that is most fair. But in the New Jerusalem the saints shall at length gather the fruit of their earthly lives. But, above all, the saints of God shall, in the eternal glory, be delivered from all spiritual distress. It is sin, spiritual desertion, and doubts, and fears, and shame, that wound the Spirit. And a wounded spirit who can bear? But all these, too, shall have come to an end. What grief, too, does the power of sin still remaining in us cause! What a grief to a true-hearted Christian, that he feels himself making so little progress in the Divine life! Finally, what bitter grief it causes the Christian heart, to mark the dishonour done to God by others, the breaking out of great iniquities, the cold-hearted worldliness of professors, the hardened indifference of sinners alike to the warnings, the rebukes, the invitations of the gospel! II. THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB SHALL BE IN IT. 1. God shall be present in glory, because there shall be in the Holy City nothing accursed, nothing polluted, and no suffering. 2. There shall be no more curse, because the throne of God and of the Lamb is there. It is by the coming of God and the Lamb into our world that the curse is expelled; and it is in the Divine power of the Lamb of God enthroned in glory that the curse is kept at bay, and never more may enter. 3. The positive blessing of heaven, the "weight of glory," consists in this presence of God. The kingly power of the Lamb not only serves to chase from the streets of the Holy City everything that defileth, and everything that can torment; but He Himself is the Sun of the saints' gladness and the Fountain of their life. That the Lord God shall dwell among them is ever represented as the sum of His people's blessedness. (*Jas. Hamilton, M.A.*) *The curse cancelled, and the kingdom begun*:—I. THE REMOVAL OF THE CURSE. Many are the curses that have lighted upon earth—the primeval curse, with all the many curses that have flowed out of the first sin. All this is now reversed; the sentence is cancelled; the curse is exchanged for blessing. The atmosphere is purged. The sun scorches not by day, nor the moon by night. Thorns and thistles disappear. Fertility is restored to earth. The wolf lies down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid; and there is nothing found to hurt nor to destroy in the holy mountain of the Lord. There is the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. II. THE ETERNAL THRONE. The new Jerusalem has come down out of heaven from God. The great kingdom has come. III. THE ETERNAL SERVICE. "His servants shall serve Him." "They serve Him day and night in His temple" (chap. vii. 15). IV. THE ETERNAL VISION. "They shall see His face" (Psa. xli. 12). V. THE ETERNAL INSCRIPTION. "His name shall be in their foreheads." VI. THE ETERNAL DAY. This is stated negatively. No night, no need of lamp nor of the sun! (Isa. lx. 19). Everlasting day! Everlasting light! Everlasting spring! VII. THE ETERNAL SUN. "The Lord God giveth them light." The light of heaven and earth, of all things material, and all things spiritual, is to come from the face of Jehovah Himself—the ONE SUN of the universe, the ONE SUN of the soul! VIII. THE ETERNAL REIGN. "They shall reign for ever and ever." A bright future is this for every one who has received the testimony of the Father to His beloved Son; for on our reception of that testimony does our right to that kingdom depend. It is so fair a prospect that it cannot fail to influence us now. 1. It purifies us. For all in it is pure and perfect. 2. It invigorates. The prospect of an inheritance like this nerves us for conflict, and makes us invincible. 3. It cheers. The light will soon swallow up the darkness. The glory will be enough to make up for all. 4. It comforts. Our light affliction will soon be swallowed up in eternal joy. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The perfect life*:—"No curse any more"—thus the last chapters of the Bible are in complete antithesis to the first. I. God, as Creator and Redeemer, is the very ground and fount of all our existence, and in that PERFECT LIFE OF THE HEREAFTER it must be yet more manifestly true that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). 1. "The throne of God shall be in it"—as indicating the absolute supremacy of God. "The Lord reigneth" now, but His reign is largely a reign of suspension, of waiting, of patience. If He does not crush and destroy His enemies, it is that He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. iii. 9); and if He does not immediately deliver His servants from all the seeming evil of life, it is because they need the discipline of pain and conflict, that they may be truly fitted for the perfect life. But to that life He will surely lead them; and even here we see a progress towards that consummation, as regards both the subdual of evil and the deliverance and victory of the good. 2. "The throne of God and of the Lamb"—as indicating that the supremacy shall be a supremacy of love. The

people of God are familiarly known, in the Old and New Testaments alike, as God's flock; and how significant, then, that the Shepherd of the sheep should be spoken of as a Lamb—a Lamb of the flock of God—one of themselves, sharing their nature, and living their life! II. THE RELATION TO THIS REDEEMING GOD OF THE REDEEMED PEOPLE is set forth under three aspects—service, vision, likeness.

1. "His servants shall do Him service." The true idea of rest, not only does not exclude, but demands service, providing there be adequate motive, scope, and strength. And in that life the motive shall be the noblest, the scope amplest, and the strength untiring. How this thought ennobles, by anticipation, the proper training of our faculties here! 2. "They shall see His face." As here, so there, there shall be an alternation of working and beholding, of service and of fellowship. Our thought must be evermore replenished from His thought, our affection from His affection, our strength from His strength. Thus the ideal shall be ever growing in our soul, that we may act with growing intensity and success on the real—in that realm, as in this, achieving victory and laying hold of life. 3. "His name shall be on their foreheads." Such shall be the resultant alike of vision and of service. Thus, by taking in and giving out, by beholding and serving, shall we become for ever like the God we love. (*T. F. Lockyer, B.A.*)

The curse abolished:—I. THE SCENE OF THIS SERVICE SHALL BE AS THE PARADISE OF GOD,—"there shall be no more curse." Here everything connected with our abode

renders the most delightful service—for such is the service of God—irksomely laborious. All our religious efforts proceed on this very fact, that we work on an accursed soil; that our iniquity has imposed on us excessive labour; and that in the sweat of our brow we must eat our bread. The land that is on high, inhabited by the servants of God, is subject to no painful or disagreeable vicissitudes. II.

NOR SHALL THE CURSE EXTEND TO THE PERSONS OF THE SAINTS, for there His servants shall serve Him: and do they not on earth, where the curse is found? No: they, it is true, attempt it; but such are their multiplied infirmities, that they confess, when they have done all, they are unprofitable, and deserve not to be viewed even as the hired servant. III. THE CURSE SHALL NO LONGER INFLUENCE THE SERVICE THEY RENDER TO GOD. "His servants shall serve Him." Our obedience on earth

scarcely deserves the name; our sinful dispositions render it more like slavery. We no sooner begin to live unto God, but conflict, toil, and fatigue, distinguish our services. Polluted are these services, in fine, as that which is corrupt cannot produce what is pure, servants so feeble and unholy must render of necessity an unprofitable obedience. IV. THE CURSE PRONOUNCED ON MAN, IS BANISHED FROM PARADISE. V. It may be observed, that as soon as the first malediction was heard, the historian adds, "So HE DROVE OUT THE MAN." "And they shall see His face"; shall render their service in His immediate presence, cheered by the complacent smiles of His gracious approbation. 1. By way of improvement, let me urge on you the necessity of inquiring, whether you are the servants of God? "And how shall we know?" Your own conscience must settle the point. 2. Let the servant of God be cheered by remembering who is his master. Every relative character is well exemplified and sustained by Jehovah. 3. Let us contemplate the happy termination of the sacred volume. It begins with the entrance of crime and the curse; and closes with the abolition of sin and misery, and an assurance of perfect and perpetual sanctity and joy. (*Wm. Clayton.*)

The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.—The immediate presence of God and the Lamb in heaven:—I.

WHAT PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE LAMB THIS PRESENCE UPON THE THRONE IS, WHICH MAKES HEAVEN, AND THE HAPPINESS OF IT, TO THE SAINTS. 1. The presence of His glory. So is the presence of God upon His throne expressed (Jude 24). By the glory of God is meant the conspicuous lustre of His perfections shining in the highest excellency of their brightness. 2. A second view of the presence of God upon His throne, that it is the facial presence of God, the presence of His face. For, in the next verse to our text, it is added, "His servants shall see His face."

3. His immediate presence, manifested no longer through obscuring mediums, as in our present state. 4. His countenancing presence. 5. The fixed and abiding presence of God and the Lamb. 6. An efficacious and influxive presence. II.

SHEW, BY COMPARING SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE, WHAT MANIFESTATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD, AND OF THE LAMB, THE SIMILITUDE OF A THRONE POINTS OUT UNTO US, AS PECULIAR TO HEAVEN. 1. The throne of God in heaven points out, that there is the highest manifestation of His absolute sovereignty and dominion over all. 2. The throne of God and of the Lamb being in this city, hints to us, that as kings use to display all their glory and majesty upon their thrones, so in heaven the shining

excellency of His majesty is most bright, and the glory of His perfections most splendid. 3. A throne is the place where the deepest respect and homage of subjects is paid to their sovereign. Heaven is the place where God hath the most solemn worship from His creatures, all His courtiers attending about His throne with a pure love and glowing zeal. 4. A throne is a place where solemn addresses are presented and answered. It is to God in the heaven, upon a throne of grace, that we are directed to come with boldness, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." 5. The throne of God, and of the Lamb, expresseth this to us, that glorious Christ appears not only in His Father's glory, which is naturally His, as He is one God with the Father, but also in that glory, honour and majesty, conferred upon Him as man and Mediator, as the reward of His sufferings and obedience. III. SHEW HOW THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE LAMB, BEING IN HEAVEN, CONTRIBUTETH TO THE HAPPINESS OF ITS INHABITANTS. 1. All contraries to happiness are inconsistent with this presence of God and the Lamb; and therefore the least opposite to blessedness can never enter into this city where this throne is. 2. As the throne of God and the Lamb, being in this city, excludeth all contraries and opposites to blessedness, so it is an immediate productive cause of the most perfect positive happiness to the utmost capacity of all its inhabitants. 3. The glory of the mediation of our Redeemer will appear to all eternity, in this city, as the procuring cause of all the happiness the saints possess in it, and the glorious Mediator Himself shall remain for ever as the mean through whom the glory and blessedness of God shall be seen by, and communicated to the saints in heaven. Uses: 1. Doth the throne of God and the Lamb make the happiness of the heavenly Jerusalem, by its being there? then, how dreadful will your misery be, who shall for ever be shut out of this city where this throne shall be. (1) Your loss, of being banished from the presence of God and the Lamb, will be infinite. (2) You shall then have a full sense of the greatness of your loss: here it doth not affect you, because you know not the infinite excellency of God and Christ; but then your eyes will be opened, and your understandings cleared to know this, and so the greatness of your loss, from what you shall see of the glory of Christ upon His tribunal. (3) If you are banished from the presence of God and the Lamb, and from this city where the throne of God and the Lamb is, you will be shut up in hell under positive torments. 2. The people of God should comfort themselves in the hope of being for ever where the throne of God and the Lamb shall be. (1) This comfort is to you who have received a whole Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, and believe upon Him with a Divine, practical, heart-purifying, and life-sanctifying faith. (2) This comfort is to you, who repent and are converted from all sin, in affection, in purpose and endeavour, unto God and His way; who have ceased to do evil, and learned to do well. (3) This comfort appertains to the upright. (*Jas. Robe, M.A.*) **His servants shall serve Him.**—*The serving and the reigning* (with ver. 5):—Setting these two passages together, we get these two truths, that the redeemed are servants, and that they are also kings. Their eternity is to be an eternity of service, and an eternity of dominion. I. SERVICE. His servants shall serve Him. They are the servants of God, and the servants of the Lamb. As Christ was the Father's servant, so do we become. Let us ask,—1. When this service begins? It begins at conversion. For conversion is (1) a change of service; (2) a change of masters; (3) a change of motive; (4) a change of work. 2. How it begins? Christ answers this: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." It begins by taking His yoke; by taking the cross; by denying self; or, as the apostle expresses it, by "obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto us." 3. How it is carried on? By a life of devotedness to God and His Christ; by doing His will, working His work, carrying out His plans, running His errands, looking after His interests. 4. Where it is carried on? First here on earth, and afterwards in the new Jerusalem before the throne. It is carried on everywhere; in the closet, in the family, at the table, round the hearth, in the market, in the shop, in the field, on the highway—everywhere. How it is to be carried on hereafter we know not. In the city and out of it; at the throne and away from it; all over space; doing every kind of work; such shall be the service hereafter. 5. How long it shall last? For ever. It has a beginning, but not an end. It is an eternal service. All other services are bondage, this is liberty: all others are drudgery, this is blessedness throughout. The Master now waits to hire you; will you not be hired? II. THE DOMINION. They shall reign for ever. This is wholly future. 1. Who are these reigners? They are men, not angels. 2. Whence came they? Out of sin, out of weakness, and persecution, and tribulation. 3. How did they become what they

are? They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. They believed and became sons of God. 4. What raised them to this dignity? Grace; God's free love. 5. In what way did they reach the throne? They fought their way to it. 6. How extensive is this dominion to be? He that overcometh shall inherit all things. Heaven and earth are theirs. "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." 7. How long is it to last? For ever. It is an everlasting dominion; a kingdom that shall not be destroyed. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Servitude and royalty (with ver. 5):—The servants and the kings are identical, they are alike the beings written in the Book of Life; the redeemed from the earth; those who have entered through the gates into the city. I take this twofold word from among the final promises of Him who cannot lie, not now to look upward through it upon the brightness of the eternal future, but to see the light of that future cast through it downward on our present life. I. HIS SERVANTS. Such is the title of the glorified. In heaven itself there is no emancipation from the bonds of God. The holy nations are eternally bound, in absolute obligation, to the will of God and of the Lamb. The created soul cannot be the basis of its own being; how could it be the source of its own joy and power, or the law of its own eternity? Weread what is but likely when weread that the nearer and the clearer is the sight of the Creator granted to the creature, the better the creature recognises the blessedness of self-surrender. Now, does not this truth of the future begin to be realised on earth? You know how full the Scriptures are of the idea of the service of God; a service not the less real as service because it can also be viewed as "perfect freedom" in the light of knowledge and love; a service not meant to be a figure of religious speech, a form of courtly deference to the Majesty above; but an obligation real and binding; compelling with the united power of the love and the law of God (John xiii. 13; Acts xxvii. 23; 1 Thess. i. 10).

II. THEY SHALL REIGN. Such is the twin promise of the better life. The bondmen of the Eternal, in that existence of endless duty, shall for ever reign. Scripture does indeed largely promise honour to man. Never does it flatter him; this is part of its Divine manner. But of hope and promise it grudges nothing to him if only he will seek it in the way of Christ. Poor must be our best conjectures of what the fulfilment will be. We cannot yet understand what is the nobility of being, the lofty purity, the greatness of knowledge, the wealth of joy and power, which are indicated in the figures of the promise, the crowns of life, and righteousness, and glory, the session on thrones, and this reigning as of kings for ever. But, little as we know of the fulfilment, the process towards it is even now begun. Even in this present world the true servant of God, in proportion to the reality and simplicity of his servitude, receives also some foretastes of his royalty. Let him, in truth, "endure, seeing Him who is invisible"; and it will bring him a power not his own over and amidst the visible. He will tread, by his Master's strength, calmly and habitually, on besetting sin; he will turn to real flight the alien armies of temptation; he will in some true sense and measure rule amongst influences at enmity with his Lord. There is no independence upon earth so strong, and so nobly strong, as that of a Christian who wills wholly to be Christ's servant. (*H. C. G. Moule, B.D.*)

The Divine reign within the soul:—I. THAT THE DIVINE REIGN WITHIN THE SOUL WILL BANISH ALL MORAL CURSE. 1. That the unregenerate soul of man is under the dire curse of sin. 2. That the Divine reign tends to the ultimate banishment of the curse of sin from the soul. II. THAT THE DIVINE REIGN WITHIN THE SOUL WILL AWAKEN TO HALLOWED SERVICE. 1. The Divine reign within the soul awakens the truest feeling of service. 2. The Divine reign within the soul imparts the highest capability of service. 3. The Divine reign within the soul reveals the best opportunity of service. III. THAT THE DIVINE REIGN WITHIN THE SOUL WILL TEND TO A CLEAR VISION OF GOD. This vision is—1. Sublime. 2. Attractive. 3. Transforming. IV. THAT THE DIVINE REIGN IN THE SOUL LEADS TO THE DISSIPATION OF MORAL DARKNESS. What a glorious privilege and capability to be equal to the enjoyment of an eternal day—for the sun never to set upon the activity and love of the soul. V. THAT THE DIVINE REIGN IN THE SOUL LEADS TO MORAL KINGHOOD. Lessons: 1. That the throne of God must be established in the soul of man. 2. That the Divine reign in the soul is conducive of the highest good. 3. That only the good will enjoy eternal moral sunlight. (*The Study.*) *The heavenly life*:—I. HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS CONSISTS OF SERVICE. Even the angels excel in strength to do His commandments. We shall never get beyond that. The highest blessedness consists in being beneficently useful and reverently obedient. Our aim should not be to become ornamental, but to render perfect service. To serve God without imperfection, without the frailty of this human nature of ours,

without the sin that mixes up here with our divinest things; that is the highest ambition of every true servant of God. The truth emphasised here is the advancement of the true servant into higher spheres of service. This is just what heaven will do for us. It will not take away from us the opportunity or capacity for service, it will only ennoble and exalt all. Who of us will not begin to serve Him here? Never mind where you begin. It may be in the back kitchen, or in the scullery, in God's great house. You may not be required to take a prominent or honourable part in it; go on and do the little work you have to do—do it well, and according to the fidelity of your service shall be your progress, until at last you shall enter into the highest celestial meaning of a service that began amid earthly infirmities and human sin. II. The Lord's servants shall have not only exaltation in service, but also **FULNESS OF VISION**—"And they shall see His face." This clear vision of God is spoken of by Our Lord Himself as the reward of purity. "The pure in heart shall see God." The obedient spirit is the seeing one. The doer must ever be the true seer. The only way in which you can see Him face to face is to take the path which He has taken. III. **HIS NAME SHALL BE UPON THEIR FOREHEADS.** The face of God seems always to represent the revelation of Him by vision, and His name the revelation of Him by testimony. In our text, those who see His face are represented as bearing His impress, and carrying the sign of ownership upon their foreheads. The forehead is that part of the face expressive of strength. (*D. Davies.*) *Heaven, as a state of service unto God and the Lamb before the throne:—I. THE CHARACTERS OF THOSE WHO ARE THE LORD'S SERVANTS HERE, AND SHALL BE CONTINUED IN HIS SERVICE TO SERVE HIM IN HEAVEN.* 1. If you are such servants now, as shall be admitted to serve Him in heaven, you will have embraced by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, and the covenant of grace. 2. If you are such servants now as shall serve Him in heaven, then you have been effectually called, possessed by the Spirit of Christ, quickened, sanctified, and planted by Him into Jesus Christ, after the likeness of His death and resurrection from the dead. 3. If you are His servants, who shall serve Him not only in this but the coming world, you will have renounced all other lords and masters. 4. If you are the servants of God and the Lamb, who shall serve Him in heaven, you will live under a sense and conscience of this your dedication, not as your own, but God's. 5. Are you devoted and addicted to the fear of God, not a slavish, but filial fear of Him? II. **THE SERVICE YOU, WHO ARE THE SERVANTS OF GOD NOW, SHALL BE EMPLOYED IN WHEN YOU ARE IN HEAVEN.** 1. As to the matter and particular kind of the service of the saints in heaven, it is yet a secret, and in a great measure unknown to us. (1) The service of the Lord's servants in heaven excludeth all service and duty which imply a state of probation and trial, a state of imperfection, and which have the nature of means leading, by the appointment of God, to salvation with eternal glory as the end. (2) The service of the saints in heaven will contain in it all those duties that the relation between the Creator and the creature, the Redeemer and the redeemed, doth infer in an eternally fixed state of perfect holiness and happiness. (3) Your service in heaven will be such as the angels of God are employed in. (4) The service of the Lord's servants in heaven will be the service of special and immediate attendance. (5) Your service, who are now the servants of God and the Lamb, shall be the service of rulers and governors in the life to come. (6) Your service and work in heaven will be Sabbath-service and work. (7) Your service in heaven will be temple-service. (8) Your service in heaven will be eucharistical service, consisting in the exercise of the praising graces, and performance of the work of praise. (9) A performance of the duties of love to all your fellow-servants, consistent with a state of perfect blessedness in the full enjoyment of God, will be service in heaven to God and the Lamb. 2. In what manner the Lord's servants shall serve Him in heaven. (1) Without weakness. (2) Without weariness. (3) Without distraction. (4) Without interruption and intermission; there shall be no impediment from business, or need of sleep. (5) Without the least defect, imperfection, or sin. (6) You shall serve Him for ever, even to eternity. Your joys shall be everlasting, and so shall be your thankful service. III. **WHENCE IT IS THAT THEY, WHO ARE GOD'S SERVANTS NOW, SHALL SERVE HIM IN HEAVEN.** 1. From the sovereign, rich, and free grace of God. 2. From the merit and intercession of the Son of God. 3. From the efficiency of the Holy Ghost. "He seals the servants of God unto the day of redemption"; and is so good as to "lead them into heaven, the land of uprightness." 4. From the faithfulness of God. 5. From the unchangeableness of God. Conclusion: 1. Is it a part of the happiness of heaven that the servants of God and the Lamb shall serve

Him in heaven? then hence we may learn that heaven is a state of eternal service to God and the Lamb. 2. Shall the Lord's servants now serve Him in heaven? then there is more honour and happiness in active doing holy duties than we are well aware of. 3. Shall these, who are His servants now, serve Him hereafter in heaven? Then you have in this what to answer to the atheist's profane query, "What profit is it to serve God?" 4. Learn from this clause of our text, in its connection, that an uninterrupted serving God, and an uninterrupted communion with God, and enjoyment of Him go together. (*Jas. Robe, M.A.*) *The service of God*:—There is not a little in the temper of our day which resists the thought that God is a Master. Many people more or less consciously recoil from the assertion of a claim so imperative as is necessarily involved in such a conception of the Supreme. Some absolutely reject religion on this account; they think, or speak as if they thought, that their independence would be compromised, their dignity insulted, by the recognition of a Sovereign in heaven, no less than by subjection to a master on earth; perhaps they go so far as to say that the very notion of a God claiming to have dominion over man's whole being is an invention of the governing orders, a piece of the machinery devised by their class-selfishness for the obvious purpose of "keeping the people down." Others, who cannot dispense with religion altogether, endeavour, as far as possible, to keep the idea of Divine sovereignty in the background. Perhaps they may in part be under the influence of a recoil from one-sided and repellent views of that Sovereignty, which were a stumbling-block to believers in the Divine moral perfection. But the reaction must be worse than extravagant which leads men to emphasise "the Fatherhood of God" by detaching from it, in effect, the idea of paternal authority (Mal. i. 6). Given the idea of a living God, and the conviction that we are bound to serve Him follows; and Scripture does but emphasise the conclusion which natural reason forces upon all serious theists. "I am Thy servant," is the burden of all that intercourse between the human soul and its God which pervades and vitalises the Psalter; and the prophet's language about "the Lord's servant," passes beyond an "idealised Israel" to its fulfilment in the obedience completed on the Cross. And although the gospel is a "law of liberty," yet no delusive spirit from the pit ever uttered a deeper falsehood than that which could confound liberty with license, or deny that moral law is involved in the relations between men. St. Paul repeatedly intimates that God's moral law is still to be the rule of Christian conduct; he speaks of the "law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus," and of our "fulfilling the requirements of the law," very much as St. James speaks of the "royal law of liberty," and as St. John identifies sin with "lawlessness." Furthermore, the gospel reveals a new and special ground of the obligation of God's service; He has acquired a supernatural right over us in virtue of the fact of our redemption. If we have been bought, in the Scriptural imagery, at no less a price than the blood of God's own Son, it follows that "we are not our own": we cannot be "without law to God," we must be "under law to Christ" (1 Cor. vi. 19; ix. 21). If we call Him Saviour, we must also call Him King. Two phrases are used in the New Testament, to impress this thought upon us. In some passages a word is used which originally represented the condition of a hired servant (Acts xxvii. 23; Rom. i. 9; 2 Tim. i. 3; Heb. ix. 14). But as if this term were not strong enough to stand alone, the relation between a bondservant or slave, and a master whose rights over him were absolute—a relation which Christianity was to undermine, but which for the time was suffered to exist—is utilised, so to speak, for the purpose of enforcing this great lesson (Rom. i. 1; Gal. i. 10; Phil. i. 1; Tit. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1; Rev. i. 1; James i. 1; Jude i.). In the text both phrases are combined: "His slaves shall do Him service for wages." Do we shrink from the austerity of this language? Do we fancy that it makes our religion servile—that if apostles used it in their own time, we need not treat it as symbolising a permanent truth—that it is, in fact, a surviving fragment of Judaism, inconsistent with the higher apostolic affirmation, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty?" Do we plead, so to speak, that our Lord has promised us the truest freedom as the result of an effective knowledge of the truth, and that, on the last evening of His earthly ministry, He said to His faithful eleven, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends"? Well, this was His gracious condescension, assuring them that their relation to Him was to be one of affectionate confidence. Blessed be His name, He does not keep us at arm's length; He does not treat us coldly, sternly, magisterially: we are to be "willing," freewill offerings, "in the day of His power." We are to be made "sons" in Him, the true and only-begotten Son, and so to be "free indeed." His service is to be, in a most true sense, perfect freedom, or even a true

royalty; but it must needs be service, if He is what He is, if we are what we are. Take just one noble and beautiful instance of the combination of obedience and love, of service and joyfulness, in him who had apparently been consecrated to the episcopate by St. John, and who, when invited to save his life by uttering some form of renunciation of Christ, answered, "Eighty-six years have I been His servant, and He has done me no wrong: how, then, can I revile my King Who saved me?" (W. Bright, D.D.)

The triple rays which make the white light of heaven:—These words give us three elements of the perfect state of man—service, contemplation, likeness; these three are perfect and unbroken. 1. The first element in the perfect state of man is perfect activity in the service of God. If we have not here the notion of priesthood, we have one very closely approximating towards it. That, then, is the first thought that we have to look at. Now, it seems to me to be a very touching confession of the weariness and unsatisfactoriness of life in the general that the dream of the future which has unquestionably the most fascination for most men, is that which speaks of it as rest. Now this representation of my text is by no means contradictory, but it is complementary of that other one. The deepest rest and the highest activity coincide. They do so in God Who worketh hitherto in undisturbed tranquillity; they may do so in us. The wheel that goes round in swiftest rotation seems to be standing still. Work at its intensest, which is pleasurable work, and level to the capacity of the doer, is the truest form of rest. "They rest from their labours." "They rest not, day or night." From their labours?—yes! From toil disproportioned to faculty?—yes! From unwelcome work?—yes! From distraction and sorrow?—yes! But from glad praise and vigorous service?—never! day or night. Then there is another thing involved in this first idea, namely, the notion of an outer world on which and in which to work; and also the notion of the resurrection of the body in which the active spirit may abide, and through which it may work. Perhaps it may be that they who sleep in Jesus, in the period between the shuffling off of this mortal coil and the breaking of that day when they are raised again from the dead, are incapable of exertion in an outer sphere. At all events, this we may be sure of, that if it be so they have no desires in advance of their capacities; and of this also I think we may be sure, that whether they themselves can come into contact with an external universe or not, Christ is for them what the body is to us here now, and the glorified body will be hereafter: that being absent from the body they are present with the Lord. The next point is this: such service must be in a far higher sphere and a far nobler fashion than the service of earth. God rewards work with more work. The powers that are trained and exercised and proved in a narrower region are lifted to the higher; as some poor peasant-girl, for instance, whose rich voice has risen up in the harvest-field only for her own delight and that of a handful of listeners, heard by some one who detects its sweetness, may be carried away to some great city, and charm kings with its tones, so the service done in some little corner of this remote rural province of God's universe, apprehended by Him, shall be rewarded with a wider platform, and a nobler area for work. "Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Notice again, that the highest type of human service must be service for other people. The law of heaven can surely not be more selfish than the law for earth, and that is, "he that is chiefest amongst you, let him be your servant." The last point about this first matter is simply this—that this highest form of human activity is all to be worship; all to be done in reference to Him; all to be done in submission to Him. The will of the man in His work is to be so conformed to the will of God as that, whatsoever the hand on the great dial points to, that the hand on the little dial shall point to also. Obedience is joy and rest. To know and do His will is heaven. 2. Next, look at the second of the elements here—"They shall see His face." Now that expression "seeing the face of God" in Scripture seems to me to be employed in two somewhat different ways, according to one of which the possibility of seeing the face is affirmed, and according to another of which it is denied. The one may be illustrated by the Divine word to Moses: "Thou canst not see My face. There shall no man see Me and live" (Exod. xxxiii.). The other may be illustrated by the aspiration and the confidence of one of the psalms: "As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness." Where is the key to the apparent contradiction? Here, I think; Jesus Christ is the manifest God, in Him only do men draw near to the hidden Deity, the King Invisible, Who dwelleth in the light that is inaccessible. And here on earth we see by faith, and yonder there will be a vision, different in kind, most real, most immediate and direct, not of the hidden Godhood in itself, but of the revealed God.

hood manifest in Jesus Christ, Whom in His glorified corporeal Manhood we shall perceive, with the organs of our glorified body, Whom, in His Divine beauty we shall know and love with heart and mind, in knowledge direct, immediate, far surpassing in degree and different in kind from the knowledge of faith which we have of Him here below. But there is another point I would touch upon in reference to this second thought of our text—viz., its connection with the previous representation, “They shall serve Him,” that is activity of service in our outer sphere; “they shall see His face,” that is contemplation. The Rabbis taught that there were angels who serve, and angels who praise, but the two classes meet in the perfected man, whose service shall be praise, whose praise shall be service. 3. The last element is “His name shall be in their foreheads.” The metaphor is taken from the old cruel practice of branding a slave with the name of his master. And so the primary idea of this expression: “His slaves shall bear His name upon their foreheads,” is that their ownership shall be conspicuously visible to all that look. But there is more than that in it. How is the ownership to be made visible? By His name being on their foreheads. What is “His name”? Universally in Scripture “His name” is His revealed character, and so we come to this: the perfect men shall be known to belong to God, in Christ, because they are like Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Devoted service*:—Caroline Herschel, the sister of the great astronomer, was through all her life the most attached servant to her brother. She called herself “a mere tool, which my brother had the trouble of sharpening.” She learned the details of observing with such success that she independently discovered eight comets. Her devotion was most complete. Wherever her brother was concerned she abolished self, and replaced her nature with his. Having no taste for astronomy, her work at first was distasteful to her, but she conquered this, and lived to help his work and fame. *They shall see His face.*—*The heaven of heaven*:—The Italians so much admire the city of Naples, that their proverb is, “See Naples and die”; as if there remained nothing more to be seen after that fair bay and city had been gazed upon. To behold the far fairer sight mentioned in the text men might well be content to die a thousand times. Forget for awhile your present cares, and live for awhile in the future which is so certified by faithful promises that you may rejoice in it even now! I. THE BEATIFIC VISION. “They shall see His face.” It is the chief blessing of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus. Christ is all in all to us here, and therefore we long for a heaven in which He shall be all in all to us for ever; and such will the heaven of God be. The paradise of God is not the Elysium of imagination, the Utopia of intellect, or the Eden of poetry; but it is the Heaven of intense spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus. In the beatific vision it is Christ whom they see; and further, it is His “face” which they behold; by which I understand two things: first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, His all in all, as they never understood Him before. II. THE SURPASSING CLEARNESS OF THAT VISION. “They shall see His face.” The word “see” sounds in my ears with a clear, full, melodious note. We see but little here. “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Around us all is mist and cloud. What we do see, we see only as if men were trees walking. The saints see the face of Jesus in heaven, because they are purified from sin. The pure in heart are blessed: they shall see God, and none others. They may well see His face when the scales of sin have been taken from their eyes, and they have become pure as God Himself is pure. They surely see His face the more clearly because all the clouds of care are gone from them. Moreover, as they have done with sin and cares, so have they done with sorrows. They see His face right gloriously in that cloudless atmosphere, and in the light which He Himself supplies. Moreover, the glorified see His face the more clearly because there are no idols to stand between Him and them. III. THE MATCHLESS PRIVILEGE WHICH THIS VISION INVOLVES. We may understand the words “they shall see His face” to contain five things. They mean, first, certain salvation; secondly, a clear knowledge of Him; thirdly, conscious favour; fourthly, close fellowship; and lastly, complete transformation. IV. WHO THEY ARE TO WHOM THIS CHOICE BOON IS AFFORDED BY THE DIVINE MERCY. “They shall see His face.” Who are they? They are all His redeemed, all the justified, all the sanctified. Some are taken away to see His face while yet young. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The face of Jesus*:—“His face”! That can never be produced upon canvas; that is the medium of Divine revelation; that is the type of perfect humanity. I. HEAVEN

POSSESSES ONE SPECIAL ATTRACTION—the face of Jesus. 1. This chides our idle speculation. The presence of Jesus makes heaven, and to see His face is eternal joy. 2. Here is a test for our religious desires. Do we long to see Jesus? II. HEAVEN WILL CONTINUE THE EXPERIENCE OF EARTH. 1. It is possible to see Jesus now. We can see His face in the mirror of the Word—dimly in the law, gloriously in the gospel. We can see it smiling from the Cross. We can see it in the gifts of His heart. 2. It is possible to realise heaven upon earth. III. HEAVEN WILL SOOTHE THE DEEPEST SIGHING OF THE REGENERATED HEART. IV. HEAVEN WILL PERFECT OUR LIKENESS TO JESUS. (*Philip Reynolds.*) *The vision of God*:—Of all the happiness and honour that fill that city of glory, this is the sum, and the centre, and the overflow: “They shall see His face.” I. WHOSE FACE? It is the face of God; and that face is Jesus, the Word made flesh; the brightness of His glory, &c.; light of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. It is the face of majesty, yet the face of love. Like unto it there is not any face in earth or heaven—in all the vast universe of God—so bright, so fair, so perfect, so glorious, so Divine. II. WHO SHALL SEE IT? His servants. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.” “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” “If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.” III. WHAT IS IT TO SEE HIS FACE? See *Psa. xli. 12*; *Esther i. 14*; *2 Kings xxv. 19*. 1. Nearness. These servants form the inner, nay the innermost, circle of creation. 2. Blessedness. The nearest of the disciples was the most blessed, the disciple whom Jesus loved. The nearest to Him in heaven will be the most blessed. 3. Honour. To see the king’s face was the great earthly honour; so is it the greatest heavenly honour. 4. Power. They who see the King’s face are His counsellors, His vicegerents, the doers of His will. Christ’s throne is theirs—for “he that overcometh shall inherit all things.” This seeing of the face of God and His Christ will be: (1) Eternal. It cannot end. (2) Unchangeable. No interruption; no eclipse; no cloud; no darkness; no setting; no dimness of eye; no unbelief; no distance. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The facial vision of God*:—I. WHO THEY ARE THAT SHALL SEE THE FACE OF GOD AND THE LAMB IN HEAVEN. 1. All real believers. 2. The Lord’s servants. 3. The pure in heart (*1 John iii. 2, 3*). 4. The righteous (*Psa. xvii. 15*). II. WHAT IS IMPORTED IN SEEING THE FACE OF GOD AND THE LAMB. 1. To see the face of God and the Lamb certainly imports being in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb. 2. To see the face of God and the Lamb importeth an ocular bodily sight of a sensible Divine glory; it is a sight of the face of the Lamb of God incarnate, and in the nature of man, with a glorified super-exalted body. 3. To see the face of God and the Lamb importeth a mental and intellectual sight or knowledge of the glorious perfections of God and the Lamb, shining in their brightest lustre. 4. To see the face of God and the Lamb certainly importeth such a discovery and view of God, and of Jesus Christ, as was never attained by any in this life. 5. To see the face of God and the Lamb importeth a perfect enjoyment of the love and favour of God and the Lamb, a sense and feeling of this favour, and the blessed fruits and effects of it. 6. To see the face of God and the Lamb certainly imports a humble and holy confidence and ability to look upon the face of God and the Lamb. 7. To join them together, immediate and familiar communion with, and the enjoyment of God and the Lamb are hinted to us in this expression, as the attainment of the saints in heaven. An expression of more wonderful condescendency cannot be used, than that of Jehovah’s way of conversing with Moses (*Exod. xxxiii. 11*). III. HOW THE SIGHT OF THE FACE OF GOD AND THE LAMB TENDETH UNTO, AND IS A PART OF OUR HAPPINESS IN HEAVEN. 1. The object of this vision is the face of God and the Lamb, that is, the glory of the infinite perfections of God, shining in the highest excellency of their brightness. 2. Consider the act of this vision itself, it is a knowledge of God and His glory—not by report, as all the knowledge of faith we have in this state is;—not by reasoning, as here, which is wearisome and uncertain, but by sight or knowledge directly taking in the glory manifested. It will be a vigorous and efficacious sight, the faculty being strengthened and made able to bear the discoveries of this glory by the object itself. 3. Consider the effects of seeing the face of God and the Lamb in heaven: by this we shall know all things fit for us to know. IV. WHAT REASON YOU, WHO ARE THE SERVANTS OF GOD AND THE LAMB, NOW HAVE TO BE ASSURED THAT YOU SHALL SEE HIS FACE IN HEAVEN. 1. You have good and real right to this happiness, upon a manifold title, such as God the Father’s eternal purpose and election. 2. God hath begotten an insatiable desire in you to see His face in heaven. 3. All the Redeemer’s offices are engaged to bring all

His servants unto God, and set them in His presence for ever. V. WHEN THE LORD'S SERVANTS SHALL BE ADMITTED TO SEE HIS FACE. 1. Our souls shall, immediately after death, be admitted to see God. 2. The most eminent season of our being admitted to see the face of God and the Lamb is the day of the resurrection; then shall our bodies be raised up glorified, and reunited unto our long-before glorified souls. (1) To all the hearers of the gospel. Let it be the great scope, end, and business of your lives, to attain this happiness when you die. (2) Labour to attain to a more certain knowledge and assurance of this, that you shall see His face for ever in heaven. (3) Think much upon the obligations you are under to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for this hope laid up for you in heaven; and live in the continual praises of the ever-blessed Three in One. (4) Labour to have as much of this happiness of heaven, of the vision of the face of God and the Lamb, here upon earth, as you can attain, and to exercise yourselves much therein. (5) Live in the earnest, desirous, patient hope and expectation of this happiness laid up for you in heaven; this is good, and blessedness next to the beatifical vision itself. (6) Let the foresight of this glorious happiness mortify you to all human and earthly glory. (7) Keep your eyes outward and inward, as these that are to see the face of God and the Lamb. (8) Study holiness, and endeavour to attain much of it. (*Jas. Robe, M.A.*) *The heavenly life: the living God with His living servants*:—The Holy Scriptures maintain a consistent and marked reserve in respect of the details of the future life. God calls the soul first, not to reveries, but to repentance. I. THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE. This is the first element in the promise. It needs no elaborate proof that the Bible presents the presence of the personal God as the soul's last and highest hope. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" "In Thy presence is fulness of joy"; "We shall see Him as He is." Nor does it need long proving that this supreme hope, in all views of the future other than that of the Bible, is either absent or quite secondary. The Buddhist votary, far from longing for the sight of a Divine Countenance, desires as his *summum bonum*—his one true felicity (only too great to be confidently hoped for)—the dissolution of his own illusory yet weary personality into the deep repose of a universe of non-existence. The Elysium of Virgil, the happy fields of the just, laborious, and noble-hearted, is nothing but a pale reflection of the joys of earth, and bears not a trace of the ruling and energising power of a Divine Presence in the midst of it. In the great Mythos of Plato, again, the chariot-borne spectators of reality, the personages of that vast festal procession which climbs up the steep sides of the lower sky to the ideal heaven, behold at length not a Divine Countenance, loving and loved; they discover only splendours magnificent but cold: universals as they are—absolute justice, temperance, and knowledge—but not One who is eternal and beatifying love. The Pantheist, ancient or modern, western or eastern, hopes only to sink hereafter somewhat deeper into that will-less and loveless absolute which, after all, he holds that he has never left; for all things, in his creed, are but equally and always parts, and no more, of the one Being in its aimless and unbeheld development. It is the Bible, and the Bible only, that makes the presence of an eternal and holy Person the final object of the hopes of man. "They shall see His face." Heaven, if it includes the idea of endlessness, needs the presence of a Person both eternal and lovable, if it is to be not happy only, but other than terrible, to the created and limited being. It is a woful mistake to feed our souls in prospect on the food of the presence, not of the Creator, but of the creature. Dreadful would be the ultimate famine in the bright but then restless regions, if the created souls were left there to subsist for ever on the resources of each other and themselves. "They shall see His face—they shall be satisfied with His likeness." II. AND HIS NAME SHALL BE IN THEIR FOREHEADS. We look on this clause now, not as revealing the Lord God's influence in the endless life, but as witnessing to the sustained individual personality of those who shall be admitted, in that endless life, to behold His glory. The opinion of Pantheism has spread wide and deep, in many and most various regions and times. It is indeed a seductive evil, an error singularly attractive to many fine and powerful minds, especially in its guise of a quasi-worship of external nature. Yet this error can present itself to the bewildered soul under a subtle show of humility: "Slight and imperfect being! why claim, or why fear, an endless subsistence? Shall the thin flame of your little life glimmer on for ever through the windy currents of an illimitable and unresting universe? No, surely. If you are indeed created, still in no sense whatever can you stand apart from the Creator. You are but one of His, or rather of Its, countless phases. You will soon be dissolved again into the depths of His, or rather of Its,

existence." But to the whisperings of this lie, the Holy Scriptures, strong in their historic record, in their unique method of appealing to Divine facts to attest and teach eternal truths, give a negative equally uncompromising and profound. Scripture seeks not to solve the often-attempted riddle how the Infinite created the finite into a distinct subsistence: in this case, and in that of the origin of evil, it leaves in emphatic silence just the two problems which unchastened human speculation has most eagerly pursued. But that the finite was created into that mysterious distinctness; that the personality of man is real and permanent; that truth the holy Book, through all the sixteen centuries of its growth, presses home in countless ways on the heart of man—that heart in whose depths the truths alike of personality and of guilt find their sure echo. And this is part of the truth of this prophetic verse. "His name shall be," not upon floating phases of an Absolute Being, but upon "their foreheads." (*H. C. G. Moule, M.A.*) *Facing the sun*:—Dr. Clemanse said, "One day I was climbing one of the Alpine range of mountains, near the boundary line between France and Switzerland. By and by we came upon snow and icicles, and all the usual attendants in the train of winter; but when we got higher we found delightful flowers blooming, in all the beauty of floral loveliness. I said to myself, 'How is this? Down yonder are icicles and snow, up here are those exquisite flowers. The secret of it was, that this part of the mountain faced the sun, while the other was turned from it.'" So not unlike this is the change in the heart of him who turns from the cold world of sin to the warming rays of the Sun of Righteousness. **His name shall be in their foreheads.**—*Three inscriptions with one meaning* (with Exod. xxviii. 36; Zech. xiv. 20):—These three widely separated texts all speak of inscriptions, and they are all obviously connected with each other. Three things, then—the priest's mitre, the horses' bells, the foreheads of the perfected saints—three aspects of the Christian thought of holiness. **I. THE PRIEST'S MITRE.** The high priest was the official representative of the nation. He stood before God as the embodied and personified Israel. For the purposes of worship Israel was the high priest, and the high priest was Israel. And so, on his forehead, not to distinguish him from the rest of the people, but to include all the people in his consecration, shone a golden plate with the motto, "Holiness to the Lord." So, at the beginning, there stands a protest against all notions that make "saint" the designation of any abnormal or exceptional sanctity, and confine the name to the members of any selected aristocracy of devoutness and of goodness. All Christian men, *ex officio*, by the very fact of their Christianity, are saints, in the true sense of the word. It is a very unfortunate thing—indicating superficiality of thought—that the modern popular notion of "holiness" identifies it with purity, righteousness, moral perfection. Now that is in it, but that is not the whole of it. The root-meaning is "separated, set apart," and the word expresses primarily, not moral character, but relation to God. How can a man be separated and laid aside? Well, there is only one way, and that is by self-surrender. "Holiness to the Lord" is self-surrender of will, and heart, and mind, and everything. And that surrender is of the very essence of Christianity. What is a saint? Some man or woman that has practised unheard-of austerities? Somebody that has lived an isolated and self-regarding life in convent or monastery or desert? No! a man or woman in the world who, moved by the mercies of God, yields self to God as a living sacrifice. **II. THE HORSES' BELLS.** Zechariah has a vision of the ideal Messianic times, and of course, as must necessarily be the case, his picture is painted with colours laid upon his palette by his experience, and he depicts that distant future in the guise suggested to him by what he saw around him. So we have to disentangle from his words the sentiment which he expresses, and to recognise the symbolic way in which he puts it. On the whole, the prophet's teaching is that, in the ideal state of man upon earth, there would be an entire abolition of the distinction between "sacred" and "secular"; a distinction that has wrought infinite mischief in the world, and in the lives of Christian people. Let me transfer these words of our prophet into English equivalents. Every cup and tumbler in a poor man's kitchen shall be as sacred as the Communion chalice that passes from lip to lip with the "blood of Jesus Christ" in it. Every common piece of service that we do, down among the vulgarities and the secularities and the meannesses of daily life, may be lifted up to stand upon precisely the same level as the sacredest office that we undertake. The bells of the horses shall jingle to the same tune as the trumpets of the priests within the shrine, and on all, great and small, shall be written, "Holiness to the Lord." Hallow thyself, and all things are clean unto thee. **III. THE PERFECTED SAINTS' FOREHEADS.** It is only the name

that is written in the perfected saints' forehead. Not the "Holiness unto the Lord," but just the bare name. What does that mean? Well, it means the same as your writing your name in one of your books does, or as when a man puts his initials on the back of his oxen, or as the old practice of branding the master's mark upon the slave did. It means absolute ownership. But it means something more. The name is the manifested personality, the revealed God, the character, as we say in an abstract way, the character of God. That name is to be in the foreheads of His perfected people. How does it come to be there? Read the clause before. "His servants shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." That is to say, the perfected condition is not reached by surrender only, but by assimilation; and that assimilation comes by contemplation. The faces that are turned to Him, and behold Him, are smitten with the light and shine, and those that look upon them see, "as it had been, the face of an angel," as the Sanhedrin saw that of Stephen when he beheld the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Alas! alas! it is so hard for us to live out our best selves, and to show to the world what is in us. Cowardice, sheepishness, and a hundred other reasons prevent it. In this poor imperfect state no emotion ever takes shape and visibility without losing more or less of its beauty. But yonder the obstructions to self-manifestation will be done away; and when He shall be manifested "we also shall be manifested with Him in glory." (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *On the happiness of heaven, as it consists in a conformity to God and the Lamb:—*I. SHOW WHAT SEEMS TO BE HINTED IN THIS SCRIPTURE, CONCERNING THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN, AS IT IS A LIKENESS TO GOD AND THE LAMB. 1. The saints in heaven have the name of God upon them; that is, they shall have upon them a likeness unto, and resemblance of these glorious perfections, whereby God hath manifested and made Himself known unto us, called His Name in Scripture. (1) It is a likeness to God in His moral and communicable perfections and excellences. (2) In heaven we shall be like God in happiness and glory. 2. The saints in heaven have the Lamb's name upon them. (1) Their souls shall be like unto the soul of Jesus Christ, in all the faculties thereof. "When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory," that is, not only as pure and holy creatures, but as glorious and happy creatures. For Christ shall give unto them the same glory which the Father hath given Him, and this not only unto their souls, but also, (2) Unto their bodies; for they shall be like unto Christ in heaven in their bodies. 3. The name of God and the Lamb is in their foreheads; that is, (1) Their relation to God and the Lamb, and their conformity and likeness will then be open, evident and apparent, as that is which is upon the forehead. (2) His name in their foreheads intimateth this unto us, that our likeness to God and the Lamb in heaven will be glory. Here it is grace, it is excellent, though it is most in the hidden man of the heart; but in heaven it not only is excellent, as it is here, but excellency shining and appearing openly upon them, in their foreheads. (3) His name shall be in their foreheads doth intimate this to us, that, how great soever the glory of the saints in heaven shall be, it shall not be the same with the glory of God and the Lamb; it is only a likeness of it. 4. His name shall be in their foreheads intimateth to us that the glory, given unto the saints, manifesteth the glorious perfections of God and the Lamb; it manifests the name of God, that is, the glory of God and the Lamb. II. SOME CONSIDERATIONS FROM WHENCE IT WILL APPEAR WHAT A CONSIDERABLE PART OF THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN THIS LIKENESS TO GOD AND THE LAMB IS. 1. If no more should be said but this, that it is a likeness to the blessed God and the glorious Mediator, to the utmost of our capacity it expresseth a happiness great above our present comprehension. 2. It must be an inconceivable happiness, seeing it is the final result and issue of the eternal wisdom and counsel, project and purpose of God, to give unto His people a happiness worthy of Himself to bestow, and such as should never make Him ashamed to be called their God. 3. The greatness of this happiness appeareth from the consideration of the stupendous means made use of to accomplish it. It is an end brought about, by no less a mean than the incarnation and whole mediation of the Son of God. 4. This is the end of all the wishes, endeavours and expectations of the people of God. Conclusion: 1. If, upon reflection, you find or suspect yourselves to be wholly unsuitable to this blessedness, apply yourselves to speedy, diligent and incessant endeavours to get the temper and disposition of your spirits changed and fitted thereto, by a begun likeness to God and the Lamb in holiness and purity. Strive to get His image and likeness deeply engraven upon your souls, by a work of regeneration and sanctification. 2. Labour not only after

a likeness to God and the Lamb; but to let the world see it in your lives, and to scatter the beams of it in your conversations, for the enlightening a dark world; or, in the terms of our text, labour to have as much of the name of God and of the Lamb on your foreheads now, as can be. (1) By word, confessing His name, His truths, and His ways, in this evil and adulterous generation. (2) By deeds, in your endeavouring to be like Him in yourselves, especially in those graces and virtues, whereby you may commend Him and religion most unto strangers and enemies. (*Jas. Robe, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. *There shall be no night there.*—*The light of the blessed*:—This declaration would be no good news to us in our present state. Night brings rest and refreshment to wearied bodies, and often over-laden minds. Yet who of us all remembers to give thanks, because daylight does not invite us unceasingly to toil and anxiety? But, if we think upon the subject, we shall see that the blessings of the night are all connected with a state of trouble, labour, and imperfection. Hence we may understand there being in heaven no time of sleep and darkness. For centuries we have been trying to light up a dark world, and trying in vain. There is indeed a light come into the world, but it shineth in a dark place. It is pleasant news to many that Christ died to save sinners, but when told that all this was to bring them nearer to God, to enable them “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,” then the greater number turn from the light and plunge back into the darkness. Some there are who do humbly and thankfully accept that light. Their path shineth more and more; yet even with them it is very far from being “perfect day.” They have light, but it is to guide them through darkness, for life here is, and must be, “this night” to the Christian, though he sees afar off the rising of the dawn. He is here in much ignorance of God’s character, works, and ways. He knows enough to save him, but not enough to satisfy him. God’s dispensations are full of mystery; God’s dealings in his own case are often a trial to his belief. Again, Satan tempts the Christian to doubt the love of God, the truth of God, and the word of God, and to question whether he is really in a state of salvation. At times he feels in much darkness through these temptations; almost lost. “There shall be no night there.” Once more, the Christian’s life on earth is darkened by frequent mourning, and by death. Fears dim his vision, friends pass out of his reach, he beholds them no more! But there are no graves, no funerals, in heaven; for there shall be no more sorrow, nor sighing, nor any night there. (*F. J. Scott, M.A.*) *Heaven*:—We may safely say that those who muse much on heaven are often privileged with such foretastes of what God hath prepared for His people, as serve, like the clusters of Eshcol, to teach them practically the richness of Canaan. With them it is not altogether matter of report that the inheritance of the saints is transcendently glorious. They have waited upon the Lord, until, according to the promise of Isaiah, they have been enabled to “mount up with wings as eagles.” I. WITH OUR PRESENT CONSTITUTION THERE WOULD BE NOTHING CHEERING IN AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH TOOK AWAY NIGHT FROM OUR GLOBE. The alternation of day and night, the two always making up the same period of twenty-four hours, is among the most beautiful of the many proofs that God fitted the earth for man, and man for the earth. We know that other planets revolve in very different times on their axis, so that their days and nights are of very different lengths from our own. We could not live on one of those planets. We could not, at least, conform ourselves to the divisions of time: for we require a period of repose in every twenty-four hours, and could not subsist, if there were only to come such a period in every hundred, or in every thousand. And besides this, it is very easy to speak of night as the season of dreariness and gloom, as the representative of ignorance and error—but what should we be without night? Where is there so eloquent an instructor as night? What reveals so much of the workmanship of the ever-living God? So that there is not necessarily anything very desirable in the absence of night: it would be the reverse of a blessing to us in our present condition, and would imply the diminution rather than the enlargement of knowledge. What then are we to learn from the statement that there shall be no night in heaven? We learn much, whether it be the natural, or the figurative, night, whose total absence is affirmed. Night is now grateful, yea necessary, to us, as bringing quiet and repose to overwrought bodies and minds. But all this arises from the imperfectness of our present condition; we are so constituted that we cannot incessantly pursue either occupation or enjoyment, but must recruit ourselves. And it would evidently be to raise us very greatly in the scale of

animated being, to make it no longer needful that we should have intervals of rest; body and soul being incapable of exhaustion, or rather of fatigue. There is no night there, because there we shall need no periods of inactivity; we shall never be sensible of fatigue, and never either wish or want repose. It is given as one characteristic of Deity, that He never slumbers nor sleeps. It is affirmed moreover of the four living creatures which are round about the throne, that they "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." And, therefore, I read the promise of a splendid exaltation, of an inconceivable enlargement of every faculty and capacity, in the announcement of the absence of night. And though it be true that night now discloses to us the wonders of the universe, so that to take from us night were to take a revelation of the magnificence of creation, whence comes this but from the imperfection of faculties—faculties which only enable us to discern certain bodies, and under certain circumstances, and which probably suffer far more to escape them than they bring to our notice? Be it so, that night is now our choice instructor. I feel that night is to cease because we shall no longer need to be taught through a veil, because we shall be able to read the universe illuminated, and not require as now to have it darkened for our gaze. I shall be adapted in every faculty to an everlasting day. And if from considering night in its more literal, we pass to the considering it in its metaphorical sense, who can fail to be struck with the beauty and fulness of the promise of our text? We take night as the image of ignorance, of perplexity, of sorrow. And to affirm the absence of night from the heavenly state may justly be regarded as the affirming the absence of all which darkness is used to represent. I behold the removal of all mistake, of all misconception; conjectures have given place to certainties; controversies are ended, difficulties are solved, prophecies are completed, parables are interpreted. I behold the hushing up of every grief, the prevention of every sorrow, the communication of every joy. I behold the final banishment of whatsoever has alliance with sinfulness, the splendid reimpresment of every feature of the Divine image upon man, the unlimited diffusion of righteousness, the triumphant admission of the fallen into all the purities of God's presence, and their unassailable security against fresh apostacy.

II. St. John is not content with affirming the absence of night: HE PROCEEDS TO ASSERT THE ABSENCE OF THOSE MEANS OR INSTRUMENTS TO WHICH WE ARE HERE INDEBTED FOR THE SCATTERING OF DARKNESS. "They need no candle, neither light of the sun." And what then is to make their perpetual day? "The Lord God giveth them light." The whole apparatus of mirror, and temple, and sun, will be taken away, because we shall be admitted to the beatific vision, to all those immediate manifestations of Deity which are vouchsafed to the angel or the archangel. "The Lord God giveth them light"; is not this to say that the Lord God giveth them Himself? for you will remember what is affirmed by St. John, "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." And therefore God in some ineffable way is to communicate Himself to the soul. There will probably be a communication of ideas: God will substitute His ideas, great, noble, luminous, for our own, contracted, confused, obscure; and we shall become like Him, in our measure, through participating His knowledge. There will be a communication of excellences: God will so vividly impress His image upon us, that we shall be holy even as He is holy. There will be a communication of happiness: God will cause us to be happy in the very way in which He is happy Himself, making what constitutes His felicity to constitute ours, so that we shall be like Him in the sources or springs of enjoyment. The expression, "the Lord God giveth them light," seems to indicate that our future state, like our present, will be progressive; there is to be a continued communication of light, or of knowledge, so that the assertion of Solomon, "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," may be as true hereafter as here. Whatever may be the attainments of the just man whilst on earth, he sees only "through a glass, darkly." But he has yet to pass into a scene of greater light, and to read, in the opened volume of God's purposes, the explanation of difficulties, the wisdom of appointments, the nice proportions of truth. Then shall the Divine attributes rise before him, unsearchable indeed and unlimited, but ever discovering more of their stupendousness, their beauty, their harmony. Then shall redemption throw open before him its untravelled amplitude, and allow of his tracing those unnumbered ramifications which the Cross, erected on this globe, may possibly be sending to all the outskirts of immensity. Then shall the several occurrences of his life, the dark things and the bright which

chequered his path, appear equally necessary, equally merciful; and doubt give place to adoring reverence, as the problem is cleared up of oppressed righteousness and successful villany. But it shall not be instantaneous; for if the mysteries of time were exhausted, and redemption presented no unexplored district, God would remain infinite as at the first, as sublime in His inscrutableness as though ages had not been given to the searching out His wonders. Thus will the just proceed from strength to strength; knowledge, and love, and holiness, and joy, being always on the increase; and eternity one glorious morning. III. "AND THEY SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER"—"they shall be kings for ever and ever." Wonderful assertion! wonderful, because made of beings apparently insignificant. Yes, of us, who are by nature "children of wrath," of us, who are "born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," even of us is it said, "They shall be kings for ever and ever." And on what thrones shall we sit in heaven? over whom shall we be invested with dominion? I connect the different parts of the verse; and I read in its last clause, only differently expressed, the same promise, or prophecy, which I find in all the rest. I shall reign over the secrets of nature; all the workmanship of God shall be subject to me, opening to me its recesses, and admitting me into its marvels. I shall reign over the secrets of Providence; my empire shall gather back the past, and anticipate the future; and all the dealings of my Maker shall range themselves in perfect harmony before my view. I shall reign over the secrets of grace; the mediatorial work shall be as a province subject to my rule, containing no spot in all its spreadings which I may not explore. I shall reign over myself: I shall be thorough master of myself: no unruly desires, no undisciplined affections: I shall not be what an earthly king often is, his own base slave: no war between the flesh and the spirit, no rebellion of the will, no struggle of corrupt inclinations; but with all that true royalty, the royalty of perfect holiness, I shall serve God without wavering, and find His service to be sovereignty. (H. Melvill, B.D.)

The happiness of heaven, as it is a state of uninterrupted light, proceeding immediately from God:—I. WHO THESE HAPPY PERSONS ARE WHO SHALL PARTAKE OF THIS HAPPINESS. II. POINT OUT SOMETHING OF THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN AS EXPRESSED THEREIN. 1. The happiness you shall have in heaven is light, and sweet as light. (1) Knowledge. (2) Purity. (3) Joy. 2. There shall be no intermission of that happy day and light you shall have in heaven, for there shall be no night there. 3. The light the saints have in heaven is not by such means and instruments as they have it here. 4. The Lord God will give you light immediately from Himself. As the sun is seen by its own light, so will God be known by you in heaven. He will communicate Himself immediately unto you for your joy, happiness, and satisfaction, without means, and be instead of all means; for you shall "behold His face, and be satisfied with His likeness." 5. You shall be made capable in heaven to take in this light from the Lord God to your comfort and satisfaction. 6. Your light of all kinds in heaven shall be full and perfect, your knowledge, your enjoyment, your conformity to His image shall be full and perfect, for it shall be immediately from Himself. 7. Your light from the Lord God in heaven shall be everlasting and endless. Conclusion: 1. Be persuaded, without delay, to enter into that state in which you will get a right to this happiness, be made meet for it, and be actually admitted into it when you die, and at the resurrection of the just. 2. As for you who have a right and title to this happiness, give all diligence to have your right to it made clearer to your knowledge and faith, and kept clear, and to arrive unto the full assurance of the hope of it unto the end. (Jas. Robe, M.A.)

A blessed country:—I. PERFECT ILLUMINATION. 1. Material illumination. "No night." 2. Individual illumination. "No candle"—a candle lights only one or two persons. 3. Universal illumination. "Light of the sun"—illuminates the world. 4. Spiritual illumination. II. PERFECT REST. "The Lord giving them light." 1. No anxiety. 2. No exertions. 3. No dread. III. PERFECT TRIUMPH. "They shall reign." 1. Over self. 2. Over sin. 3. Over materialism. 4. Over ignorance. IV. PERFECT CONTINUANCE. "For ever"—unbroken by any shock, or change, or chance. (Thos. Heath.)

The world without a night:—I. A REALM EVER CLEAR IN VISION. 1. There will be no error in our conception of things there. Far enough am I from believing that we shall ever see all things in heaven. There will always be universes lying beyond the ken of the most penetrating eye. Nor do I believe that different minds will ever have exactly the same view of things, see things in exactly the same light. Our views will necessarily be relative. They will be true to us, but not necessarily true to others. God alone can see the whole of a thing. We only see sections and sides. Not only does it appear impossible,

but undesirable. Diversity of view gives a freshness and charm to society. Still, our range of vision, though limited, and our views, though relative, will be clear and accurate. 2. No doubt as to the path of duty. God's Will, will radiate on everything without, and will express itself in every impulse within. II. A REALM EVER PURE IN CHARACTER. There are the holy angels whose natures, through the ages of their being, have never been clouded with one impure thought or touched by the thrill of one unholy passion. The redeemed of all ages are there. They have had their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Christ, whose love for purity was so unconquerable, that He gave His life's blood to cleanse the pollution of the world, is in the midst of its throne. He who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all, fills with the sunshine of His presence the whole of that blessed scene. III. A REALM EVER BEAUTIFUL IN ASPECT. 1. All natural beauties will be there. 2. All artistic beauties will be there. The very instinct of genius is to invent, imitate, and create, and there genius will flourish in perfection. 3. All moral beauties will be there. The beauty of holiness, the beauty of the Lord, will adorn every spirit. Thus all will rejoice in each other, and all rejoice in the Lord whence all their beauty came. IV. A REALM OF EVER UNCHECKED PROGRESS. 1. No check to the advance of life. The vital energies will always be increasing. Sinew and soul, character and conscience, will be ever growing in force. No blight to wither, no shadow to chill there. But all the influences that play around existence there, inspire, invigorate, and uplift. 2. No checking of labour. Our range of action will be unrestrained. We shall be always abounding in the work of the Lord. V. A REALM EVER JOYOUS IN SPIRIT. A bright day sets the world to music. What happiness, then, must there be in a world where there is no night. (*Homilist.*) *Light the blessing of heaven* :—1. There shall be no sin there. The works of darkness are excluded, and all that have fellowship with them. And more than that—the past sins of those who are admitted shall not enter there to haunt them. 2. There shall be no more sorrow there. Heaviness may have endured for the night, but this is the morning-tide, and joy cometh. It is the harvest of joy after the seed-time of tears; and all the light and brief afflictions of the mortal life shall be turned into an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 3. There shall be no chastisement there. The fatherly correction, which brought them home, shall be no more. 4. There shall be no trial there, and no temptation any more. For they have endured, and are blessed; yea, they have endured unto the end, and they are saved. 5. There shall be no weariness there. 6. There shall be no ignorance there; but they shall all know, even as also they are known. 7. There shall be no decay there. Because there is no corruption, there shall be no more "drawing to an end as soon as we are born." 8. There shall be no loneliness there. For this also is of the night. 9. There shall be no adversary there—no spiritual wickedness any more to wrestle with in heavenly places—no powers of darkness! The prince of this world is cast out of the next; his engines, his lies, his fury, all are spent. 10. To crown all—There shall be no estrangement from God there; no more darkness of spirit; no more clouds and gloom between our spirits and their Lord. This is blessedness indeed, because it is holiness! But for that very reason, it is not blessedness for all. The night-bird, if it is disturbed at noonday, is only blinded by the sunbeams. And the light of that world will be indeed insufferable to those who in this world have loved darkness rather than light. They have refused to come to the light because their deeds were evil. And now the light has come to them, and made their deeds manifest. They have had their choice. And their place henceforth is in the outer darkness, lighted only by the fire that never shall be quenched. (*Dean Scott.*) *They shall reign for ever and ever.*—*On the happiness of heaven as an everlasting kingdom* :—I. THAT YOU, WHO ARE THE LAMB'S FAITHFUL SERVANTS NOW, SHALL REIGN WHEN YOU COME TO HEAVEN. 1. I give you some of the characters of those to whom heaven is promised as a kingdom. 2. Some Scriptural account of your reign in heaven. (1) As to what it shall consist in. Your reign in heaven will consist in your sharing, and communion with Jesus Christ, in all His communicable glory, according to your capacity. Your reign in heaven will consist in your immediate subjection unto God and the Lamb. Your reign in heaven will consist in an equality with the angels of God in glory and happiness. Your reign in heaven will consist in a satisfying possession of all happiness in God. (2) The qualities of your reign in heaven. (a) You shall reign there gloriously. (b) You shall reign in heaven jointly and severally with all the saints. (c) Your reign in heaven will be quiet and peaceable, calm and undisturbed. (d) You shall reign in heaven joyfully. (e) Your

reign in heaven shall be just and righteous. (f) Your reign in heaven shall be very long, longer than the thousand years' reign of the saints with Jesus Christ upon the earth. It will be for ever and ever. 3. Whence it is that you shall reign in heaven.

(1) The original cause of your future reign in heaven is the sovereign, rich, free love, and grace of God the Father. (2) That you shall reign in heaven is owing to the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. (3) That you shall reign in heaven will be owing to the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost. He calls you effectually to this kingdom and glory. II. THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN IS "FOR EVER AND EVER." 1. Your reign and happiness in heaven will be immutable: if it admitted any change, it would not be for ever and ever. 2. Your reign and happiness in heaven will be everlasting and without all end. It is everlasting life, everlasting consolation, an eternal inheritance, an eternal weight of glory, eternal salvation, pleasures for evermore, a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 3. But if you now inquire what the eternity of heaven and the happiness of it is founded upon, I answer, It is founded upon the eternity and unchangeableness of God and His perfections, in covenant with His people through Jesus Christ. (1) But, particularly, it is first founded upon the eternity and unchangeableness of the love, grace, mercy, and kindness of God to them. (2) It is founded upon the will and pleasure of God; it is His express will and pleasure that it shall be so (John vi. 40). (3) It is also founded upon the power of God, that is not only almighty, but an eternal power; and the strength of this power will endure for ever, to make you happy for ever, and to lengthen out your immortality. (4) It is founded upon the holiness of God. (5) It is founded upon the justice and righteousness of God (2 Tim. iv. 8; 2 Thess. i. 6, 7). Indeed, not justice to any merit in your own works, but justice to Christ's merits and His own promise. (6) It is founded upon the everlasting efficacy of the mediation of Jesus Christ. His kingdom and glory, into which you shall have an abundant entrance, is an everlasting kingdom and glory. (7) It is founded upon your eternal union and communion with the Holy Ghost. He came into you, not to stay for a time, but for ever (John xiv. 16). Infer: 1. Shall your reign and happiness be for ever and ever? Then hence see the inconceivable greatness of the hope and happiness laid up for you in heaven. 2. Then things are valuable and precious here in proportion to the influence they have in bringing us to the enjoyment of an eternity of happiness. 3. The love of God to you who are His people is incomprehensibly great, which hath designed for you a glory not only so great in itself, but also for ever. 4. Learn hence the wisdom and sagacity of the people of God, who renounce a present and temporary happiness, and choose an unseen and future blessedness because it is eternal. 5. Then let me prevail with you to seek after this eternal happiness first and most, with the utmost earnestness, industry, and self-denial. 6. Then let the servants of God and the Lamb comfort themselves and one another with the consideration of the eternity of their reign and happiness in heaven. 7. Let the consideration of the eternity of your happiness in heaven engage and excite you to the duties of holiness and obedience. (*Jas. Robe, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel.—*Transitions*:—How to bridge the epochs of change in our lives, how to pass from our visions to our tasks, from our apocalypses to the light of common days, for which they are to prepare us, carrying the best results of the one into the other, and bringing the former to true effect in the latter; this, surely, is something we need to know. These transitions are among the things to be counted upon, if our life have any sweep and movement at all. We ought to, but do not always, pass through them well. The heavenly gales which should have wafted us on to ports of power and usefulness leave us with strained masts and torn sails. How to pass through these epochs of transition without dimming the glory of the exalted mood is a question worthy of our most earnest consideration. The words we have made our text have bearing on this subject. They report the immediate sequel to the sublimest mood of spiritual exaltation. Yet that sequel was a sad blunder, involving both sacrilege and sin. Beginning the ethical application of this incident on the lowest plane, it shows us, first, that great men may make great mistakes and eminent saints fall into grievous sins. This should make us careful, humble, and charitable. We are apt to ask for a perfection in others which we know does not obtain in ourselves, and to deem our own virtue proof against the temptations to which others have succumbed. Perhaps the worst about this is that it militates against our reverence and appreciation of good men, and the influence and inspira-

tion of their real worth, when we discover these defects. We ask for perfection in heroes, prophets, and saints; when we discover the fault, which mars the perfection but not the essential worth, the effect of the work, teaching, and life is impaired, and perhaps the hero, prophet, or saint, exists for us no more. The truth is, God has given us naught that is perfect save Himself, and what flows directly from Himself; and He has no perfect representative on earth save Him who came forth from the bosom of the Father and was one with Him. But one life in which God is partially revealed in any mode is supplemented, corrected, and completed by others. It may take many heroes to fitly exemplify the power of God working in humanity; it may take many prophets to adequately set forth the truth of God so as to constitute a full, saving revelation, and it may take many saints to worthily illustrate the principle of a Divine holiness in human life, and there is a completeness and adequacy, not to say perfection, in the aggregate not to be found in the individual or section. But, more specifically, the text underscores a point of special peril in moral life. That point is the vanishing point of some special privilege, exalted mood, rich and radiant experience, or larger and intenser flow of life in any mode. We should learn to translate vision and transport into purpose and power. We experience the spiritual, intellectual, or emotional effects of sermon or prayer. Then, awakening from our ecstasy, we straightway fall down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed us these things. We praise the sermon, the service, the song, and magnify those who have ministered therein. All the subtle idolatries of sermon and service, church and creed, so prevalent in this time, are repetitions of the apostle's error in falling to worship before the feet of the revelation angel. Other heavens than those of faith are opened to us, and other apocalypses than those of spiritual vision are accorded us—heavens of domestic felicity and apocalypses of human beauty, tenderness, and worth. Angels walk by our side and show us these things, transfiguring earth's dull and prosy scenes, revealing to us the heavens of love, opening seals of affection and fellowship. But these visions fade, for they are not the perfect day, that abides; they are but prophetic gleams of a coming dawn. The scene closes. The ministering spirit is summoned from our side. Our danger, then, is of falling into idolatry of the departing angel. The house must be kept just as they left it. The clothes, and everything the loved one cherished, must be preserved as sacred mementoes, and the scenes of love's vision become the shrine of love's memorial and glorifying devotion. (*J. W. Earnshaw.*) *The temptation to creature worship* :—This incident is very decisive against anything approaching to saint or angel worship, but it yields a still deeper lesson suited to our times, which is this, that the most devout, the holiest of men, may be betrayed into thus falling. When we consider the state of things in the modern Church of Rome, two things strike us with astonishment. The first of these is the length to which this Church goes in encouraging the invocation of angels and departed saints. This is an increasing evil. It is greater now than ever it has been before. In Romish countries the worship of the Virgin in the way of Invocation far exceeds the worship paid to any Person in the Ever-Blessed Trinity. Theologians, it is true, make a distinction between the worship paid to the Virgin and saints and that paid to the Persons in the Adorable Trinity, but the vast mass of worshippers know of no such distinction. This, then, is the first thing; but another matter which fills us with astonishment, and some even with misgiving, is this, that notwithstanding this idolatry, so many devout minds have been won to this corrupt Church, and have themselves gone very far in this direction. How can it be, we ask, that men who know Scripture, and who unquestionably have their souls alive to the things of God and of Christ, can yet pay this idolatrous worship? This is staggering to some, but not if we read aright this very place of Scripture. For here we have an apostle, full of the Holy Ghost, called and taught by Christ Himself, one of those who had drunk in His profoundest teaching, twice needing the reproof, "See thou do it not; worship God." Now, how could this be? I suppose none of you have ever been tempted to do such a thing as worship an angel, or a saint, or the Blessed Virgin? It is the very last temptation you are likely to be troubled with. How, then, was it possible that this temptation should assail an apostle? Because, I answer, he had a revelation granted to him such as you or I are not likely to have, because we are utterly unworthy of it. It is not for us who have never been so favoured, who, perhaps, some of us, have never believed in an angel at all—who have never realised or tried to realise our companionship with angels, or how God works by them—it is not for us to judge this apostle; but it may be well for us to learn somewhat from him. How grand, then, beyond expression, must these visions of the New Jerusalem

and its inhabitants have been if they could so affect an apostle who had lain in the bosom of Jesus Himself! (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Worship*:—The theme contained in this one word "worship" is much larger and profounder than any of us assume. We, all of us are likely to take it for granted that we know what "worship" is. Our simplest idea of it identifies it with the public services of the Church and with family and private devotions. The word "worship" necessarily associates itself with these. But these do not by any means exhaust its meaning. Let us inquire, then, more in detail what worship is; then we may possibly be able to see how necessary it is to the lifting all our faculties into a receptive attitude towards that Divine life out of which our life continually comes. 1. Worship implies some sort of knowledge. Agnosticism cannot worship. It may not be intellectualised knowledge, and yet it must be of the nature of knowledge. Many an unschooled man is intuitively a more knowing man than is many a schooled man. His insight, judgment, wisdom, are more trustworthy. I believe, however, that every man, in being a man, constitutionally that is, has knowledge enough of God to create in him worshipful tendencies and aspirations. In order to a fulness of knowledge there must be a fulness of humanity, and there has never been but one in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 2. Let us say, then, that worship is the effort of the soul to realise the Divine presence and to partake of the Divine life. When the soul is perpetually as conscious of the Divine presence as of the presence of an external world, and partakes of the Divine life as really and as consciously as we partake now of each other's life, then worship becomes no longer an act to which we compel ourselves, but a state—the constant state of the soul before God—as real, as natural, as unforced, as genial, as sufficing, as gently reciprocal as that of two souls who, together in the same place and under the same conditions live one life. "Beholding" the glory of the Lord, ever doing it, constantly doing it, sitting with eyes fixed like an artist student before a great masterpiece, until the work becomes so real and living that it speaks quietly, silently, with unsyllabled speech to the soul of the man beholding, until his feeling is changed and his ideas are changed. The old ignorant self is no longer there—into the image of the great master he is changed, and the change keeps going on from state to state, each an advance upon the other, and all by the Spirit of the Great Master entering into him and subduing him. 3. There must also be, as has been suggested by the greatest of living English statesmen, a sufficient self-knowledge. This is the first indispensable condition for a right attitude towards the Eternal. Then, too, there must be a suitable frame of the affections—that humility and aspiration which self-knowledge ought to bring; and, again, sustained mental effort, in which each worshipper recognises that he is a priest unto God; to carry our whole selves, as it were, with our own hands into that nearer presence of God, putting aside every distraction of the outward sense, so that the feeling I am a living soul in the presence of the living God may be the controlling thought. Is it not Ruskin who says, "There is only one place in the human soul that God can occupy—the first place"? To offer Him the second place is to offer Him no place at all. How much of our public presentation of ourselves in Church services fails of being worship I need hardly suggest. Formal worship ceases to be worship. There is no worship when the heart is not in it, and yet worship is a Divine command, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." 4. There must be some imperious necessity in our nature why we should worship, or such a command would not be recorded. There are some faculties which have the telescopic power to draw the distant near: to make that visible which, in the non-exercise of them, remains invisible. On its upper side, the faith faculty has this use. Does not the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speak of it in this wise: "Now, faith is the giving substance to things hoped for—the proving of things not seen"? Doubt refuses to act, but faith acts, and so gets its proofs of things not seen. The imagination, again, is the right royal faculty of the soul. Without it we should have no poets and no prophets—many painters we might have, mere copyists, but no artists; no great masters in any department of things. We say such men have "genius"—the Bible says "vision." They see, while we reason as to whether we can see or not. Faith, imagination, vision, these are the wings of the soul—its faculties which help it to soar, to bring the distant near—to worship. If we were doomed to a prosy, mathematical, legal, commercial life, there would be no need of them. When God gave them He said to man in the giving, "Thou shalt worship." We are living in the midst of a spiritual world, whose presence, if we are living rightly, *i.e.*, according to God's laws for life, will be as real to us as is the presence of the material world. This spiritual world

contains facts which we cannot deny, such as these—intellect, conscience, reason, imagination, affection, will—none of these are material facts. No chemist, however minute and thorough his analysis, can find them in matter. They do not belong to the material. They must inhere in some substance not material. Is it not reasonable to infer that we are here not to develop the material world, except as a secondary object, but to develop ourselves, these mental and spiritual powers in us? That if we fail in developing these our failure is complete? And in order to do it we must worship that which is above us. There is no other way. The highest response we are capable of giving to the spiritual world around us is the act we call worship. It is an attitude of soul, yet an act with an infinite variety in it. They who stand and wait before God in speechless expectancy, their face ever Godward, even when making no verbal prayer, offering no syllabled request, yet hoping ever in God, are true worshippers. Wherever there is a soul delighting in God, rejoicing in God, there is worship. The perfected, glorified humanity will be one in which the worship of God is an instinct; a state of habit, an attitude of soul unforced and universal. (*R. Thomas.*) *The great invitation*:—This invitation is—I. VERY BLESSED—"Worship God." Not man, nor angels, nor self. 1. By studying His book—"Seal not the sayings," &c. 2. By believing His truth. 3. By proclaiming His gospel whether it be pleasant or unpleasant to the carnal mind (ver. 11). This invitation is—II. VERY URGENT. For—1. The time is short (ver. 10). "Behold, I come quickly." 2. The reward is dependent upon conduct—blessings to the obedient, disgrace to those who continue without. 3. The promise is only limited. The invitation is—III. VERY DIGNIFIED. 1. In consequence of its Author—Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, &c. Not a doctrine or an invitation but comes from Him in His own voice. 2. In consequence of its importance. God is the Highest Being in the universe, and to worship Him is the noblest employment. 3. In consequence of the Assistant. The Saviour speaks and all things re-echo His words. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." (*Homilist.*) *Christ, the object of worship*:—There are two propositions laid together in these words: the one negative—you must "worship" nothing that is not "God"; and the second positive—whatever is "God," "worship." Therefore at once, if Christ is God, He is to be "worshipped." And it needs only to be quite sure of His Godhead, to be certain also that not only we may, but that we ought to pray to Him—"Worship God." Suffice it, then, just to remind you of one or two passages, which are the simplest upon that subject. In prophecy—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." In praise—"Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In teaching—"Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." In argument—"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"—the whole force and sequency of the thought lying in Christ being God. In Christ's own testimony—"I and My Father are one"—"he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But let us see more distinctly what actual Scriptural example and sanction there is for paying this adoration, and addressing our petitions to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is certain that when He was upon earth many did come and make supplication to Him with every external demonstration of worship—kneeling, bowing, falling to the ground. And Christ never, in a single instance, put away the worship, or reproved the worshipper, or denied the prayer. It is matter of fact, too, that Christ told us that "all men were to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And a part, a great part of the Father's honour, is the prayer and the praise which His creatures offer Him. And we have the same truth, stated often in the New Testament, upon a wider range. For it is a name several times given to Christians—those who call upon the name of Christ. And not to multiply more, it is beyond all question, that in that world, which is the copy of us all—not the angels only, but the saints, do all, with one accord, direct their loftiest strains and their devoutest worship to Jesus Christ. We do not wonder, then, that resting itself upon this authority of Scripture, it has been the habit of the Church always to pray to Christ. In the whole, both of the Eastern and Western Churches, the custom has been universal, and never questioned, to pray to Christ. Alas! for that man or that Church which would ever forbid us, in song or in supplication, to worship Him, "the only wise God our Saviour," who, blending so comfortably the wonders of His majesty with the tenderness of His brotherhood and the humiliations of His sufferings, has said freely to the whole world, "Come unto Me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) He that is unjust, let him be unjust still . . . and he that is holy, let him be holy

still.—*The misery of the unjust and impure, and the happiness of the righteous and the holy* :—Our first remark on this passage is, how very palpably and how very nearly it connects time with eternity. The character wherewith we sink into the grave at death, is the very character with which we shall reappear on the day of resurrection. The moral lineaments which be graven on the tablet of the inner man, and which every day of an unconverted life makes deeper and more indelible than before, will retain the impress they have received unaltered by the transition to the future state of our existence. Our second remark suggested by this Scripture is, that there be many analogies of nature and experience which even death itself does not interrupt. There is nought more familiar to our daily observation than the power and inveteracy of habits, insomuch that any decided propensity is strengthened by every new act of indulgence; any virtuous principle is more firmly established than before by every new act of resolute obedience to its dictates. The law which connects our actings of boyhood or of youth with the character of manhood, is the identical law which connects our actings in time with our character in eternity. Be he a saint or a sinner, he shall be followed with his own ways, so that when fixed in his own place of everlasting destiny, the one shall rejoice in eternity in the pure elements of goodness which here he loved and aspired after; the other, the helpless and degraded victim of those passions which lorded over him in life, shall be irrevocably doomed to the worst of all torments—the torments of his own accursed nature, the inexorable tyranny of evil. Our third remark suggested by this Scripture is, that it affords no very dubious prospective of the future hell and future heaven of the New Testament. If it indeed be true that the moral rather than the material be the main ingredient, whether of the coming torment or the coming ecstasy, then the hell of the wicked may be said to be already begun, and the heaven of the virtuous may be said to be already begun in the breast of the good man. The one, in the bitterness of an unhinged and dissatisfied spirit, has a foretaste of the wretchedness before him; the other, in the peace, and triumph, and complacency of an approving conscience, has a foretaste of the happiness before him. Each is ripening for his own everlasting doom, and, whether in the depravities of the one or in the graces of the other, we see materials enough either for a worm that dieth not, or for the pleasures that are for evermore. But, again, it may be asked, will spiritual elements alone suffice to make up either the intense and intolerable wretchedness of a hell, or the intense beatitudes of a heaven? In answer to this question, let us go in detail over the different clauses of the verse now submitted to your consideration, and let us first turn your attention to the former of these receptacles; and we ask you to think of the state of that heart, in respect of sensation, which is the seat of a concentrated and all-absorbing selfishness, which feels for no other interest than its own, and holds no fellowship of truth, or honesty, or confidence with the fellow-beings around it. The man of cunning and concealment, however dexterous or triumphant in his wretched policy, is not at his ease. The stoop, the downcast regard, the dark and sinister expression of him who cannot lift up his head among his fellow-men, or look his companions in the face, are the sensible proof that he who knows himself to be dishonest feels himself to be degraded; and the inward sense of dishonour which haunts and humbles him here, is but the commencement of that shame and everlasting contempt to which he shall awake hereafter. Now, this is purely a moral chastisement, and, apart altogether from the infliction of violence or pain on his sentient economy, is enough to overwhelm the spirit that is exercised by it. Let him, then, that is unjust now, be unjust still—and in stepping from time to eternity he carries in his own distempered bosom the materials of his coming vengeance along with him. Character itself will be the executioner of his own condemnation; and instead of each suffering apart, the unrighteous are congregated together as in the parable of the tares, where, instead of each plant being separately destroyed, the order is given to bind them up in bundles and burn them. But there is another moral ingredient in the future sufferings of the wicked, besides the one we have now spoken of, suggested by the second clause of our text, and from which we learn that not only will the unjust man carry his fraud and falsehood along with him to the place of condemnation, but that also the voluptuary will carry his unsanctified habits and unhallowed passions thitherward. “And he who is filthy, let him be filthy still.” The loathing, the remorse, the felt and conscious degradation, the dreariness of heart, each following in the train of guilty indulgence here—these form but the beginning of his sorrows, and are but the presages and precursors of that deeper wretchedness which, by an unrepealed law of our moral nature, the

same character entails on its possessor in another state of existence. They are but the penalties of vice in embryo, and may give at least the conception of what these penalties are in full. It will add inconceivably to the darkness and disorder of that moral chaos in which the impenitent shall spend their eternity, when the uproar of the bacchanalian and licentious passion is thus superadded to the selfish and malignant passions of our nature, and when the frenzy of unsated desire, followed up by the languor and compunction of its worthless indulgence, shall make up the sad history of many an unhappy spirit. Before quitting this part of the subject, we have just one remark to offer. It may be felt as if we had overstated the force of mere character to beget a wretchedness at all approaching the wretchedness of hell, seeing that that character is often realised in this world, without bringing along with it intolerable discomfort or distress. Neither the unjust nor the licentious man is seen to be so unhappy here as to justify the imagination, that there these characteristics will have the power to effect such anguish and disorder of spirit as we have now been representing. But it is forgotten, first, that this world presents in its business, its amusements, and its various gratifications, a refuge from the mental agonies of reflection and remorse; and, secondly, that the governments of the world offer a restraint against those outbreaks of violence which would keep up a perpetual anarchy in the species. But we now change this appalling picture for a delightful contemplation. The next clause of the verse suggests to us the moral character of heaven. We learn from it, on the universal principle, that as they that are unjust shall be unjust still, so also the righteous now shall be righteous still. Just imagine, for a moment, that honour, and integrity, and benevolence, were perfect in the world; that each held the property, the rights, the reputation of his neighbour to be dear to him as his own; that the suspicions, and the jealousies, and the heart-burnings, whether of hostile violence or envious competition, were altogether banished from human society; that the emotions, at all times delightful, of good-will on one side were ever and anon calling the emotion, no less delightful, of gratitude back again; that truth and tenderness held their secure abode in every family; and, in stepping forth among the wider companionship of life, that each could confidently rejoice in every one he met with as a brother and a friend, we ask of you if, by this simple change—a change, you will observe, in nothing else than the *morale* of humanity—though winter should repeat its storms as heretofore, and every element of nature were to abide unaltered, yet, in virtue of a process and revolution altogether moral, would not our millennium be begun, and a heaven on earth be realised? Now, let this contemplation be borne aloft, as it were, to the upper sanctuary, where, we are told, “there are the spirits of just men made perfect; where those who were once the righteous on earth are righteous still.” Let it be remembered that nothing is admitted there which worketh wickedness or worketh a lie; and that, therefore, with every virulence of evil, detached and dis severed from the mass, there is nought in heaven but the pure, the transparent element of goodness. Think of its unbounded love, its tried and unalterable faithfulness, its confiding sincerity; think of the expressive designation given it in the Bible: “The land of uprightness.” Above all, think of the revealed and invisible glory of the righteous God, who loveth righteousness, there sitting upon His throne in the midst of a rejoicing family, Himself rejoicing over them, because formed in His own likeness; they love what He loves; they rejoice at what He rejoices in. The last clause of the verse is, “Let him that is holy be holy still.” The two clauses descriptive of the character and the place of celestial blessedness are counterparts of the two clauses descriptive of the character and the place of eternal woe. He that is righteous in the one stands compared with him that is unjust in the other; he that is holy in the one stands contrasted with him that is licentious in the other. But I would have you to attend to the full extent and significance of the term *holy*. It is not abstinence from outward deeds of profligacy alone; it is not a mere recoil from impurity in action. It is a recoil from impurity in thought; it is that quick and sensitive delicacy to which even the very conception of evil is offensive; it is a virtue which has its residence within, which takes guardianship of the heart, as of a citadel or inviolated sanctuary, in which no wrong or worthless imagination is permitted to dwell. It is not purity of action that is all we contend for; it is exalted purity of heart—the ethereal purity of the third heaven; and if it is once settled in the heart, it brings the peace, and the triumph, and the untroubled serenity of heaven along with it. In the maintenance of this, there is a conscious elevation; there is the complacency, I had almost said the pride, of a great moral victory over the infirmities of an earthly

and accursed nature; there is a health and a harmony in the soul, a beauty of holiness which, though it effloresces in the countenance and the manner and outward path, is itself so thoroughly internal as to make purity of heart the most distinctive evidence of a work of grace in time—the most distinctive evidence of a character that is ripening and expanding for the glories of eternity. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*)

Only one probation.—What is your life? A question of solemn import to every one of us. Viewed simply as to its brevity, the present life is a vapour, a dream, a tale told; but viewed in its relation to eternity and man's everlasting destiny, it assumes an awful amount of importance. The most solemn aspect of the present life is, that, brief and transitory as it is, it is the only period in which our depraved and guilty nature may experience a moral and spiritual renewal. Viewed in this light, it is impossible to overestimate the awful significance of the life that now is. Whatever be your character when you sink into the grave will be your character when you rise on the resurrection morn.

I. THAT THERE IS BUT ONE PROBATION. The whole Bible is written on this supposition. In admonitions, warnings, entreaties, threatenings, and promises all presuppose that there is only one probation. The vast agencies put into operation for reclaiming erring man imply that this is his only chance. The infinite pains and toils of the Holy Spirit and His agencies; the persistent efforts of Satan and his agents indicate that the final issue of the battle is to be decided here.

1. This truth is confirmed by the universal consciousness of men. Somehow or other man everywhere feels that if he fails here, he fails for ever. The idea, more or less, haunts him through life. Hence his dread of futurity. Wherever the notion of futurity obtains, the mind generally associates with it the idea of fixedness, changelessness. There are two perversions of this truth among men. In some heathen lands the doctrine of the transmigration of souls obtains. But this is a perversion wilfully adopted because more congenial to the depraved heart than an inexorable destiny. Popery has also perverted this truth, so deeply fixed in the human soul, by teaching its vassals to pray and pay for the souls of the departed, that, by the intercessions of the priesthood, they may be delivered from purgatory or have their sufferings mitigated. It cannot be denied that there is in the deepest heart of humanity an intuitive sense that the world to come is one of fixedness. This is true not only of Bible lands, but of heathen countries; of the barbarous as well as of the civilised. Pagan men, by their costly ceremonials, their pilgrimages and penance, are seeking to set themselves right with their gods; but is there not underlying all these cruel rites the conviction that this life is the only period in which such a reconciliation may be effected? Moreover, we think it a wise and gracious provision that there should be but one probation.
2. The prospect of a second probation would tend to counteract upon the mind of man the influences of the first. If you knew to a certainty that you were going to have a second probation, the inevitable tendency of a depraved heart would be to say, "I may safely resist any good influences that come upon me during my earthly life," since I am certain of having them again, or similar ones, in another state of being.
3. The knowledge of a second probation would furnish an inducement to delay. The procrastinating principle would be strengthened. Even now, with the knowledge that there is but one probation, untold numbers delay until it is too late, and utter ruin overtakes them.
4. Man would enter upon his second probation with hardened sensibilities and confirmed habits. Frequent resistance of truth would render him less susceptible. The probability of conversion would be less.
5. And then, in case he passed the second without repentance, his condemnation would be so much greater. Surely it is hell enough for you to endure the penalties of resisting the moral agencies of one probation, without incurring the more awful condemnation resulting from resisting the additional agencies of a second probation.

II. WHEN PROBATION IS OVER, CHARACTER IS UNALTERABLY FIXED. Men wedded to their lusts, and unwilling to abandon the wretched connection, entertain the vague notion that there is some inherent power in death to change the moral character, as if the soul must necessarily undergo some process of change for the better in its passage between this world and the next. This delusion holds many captive by its spell. There is not a syllable breathed in the inspired volume to suggest such a theory. Death is nowhere represented as a moral renovator. It is true it changes the aspect of the body. By severing it from the soul, death subjects the body to decay, corruption, and decomposition. But death touches not the soul. It affects not the character; it leads the soul through no purifying stream, nor bathes it in any cleansing fountain. Death is a disrobing, but it is a disrobing of the body and not of character. You cannot place your sins and habits in the grave with your body,

there to moulder and decay. Your friends cannot do this for you. No. Every pollution uncleansed by atoning blood the soul must carry with it into the dread future. Christ alone is the Purifier. Besides, if your hope be well founded, if death must necessarily, by some mysterious process, change your character, why do you fear death? If it can and will remove evil from your nature, and fit you for a higher world, it will be your benefactor, your friend. Why therefore stand in awe of death? The agencies which regenerate are brought to bear upon man only in the present state of being. The only power that can change the human soul from a state of sin to a state of holiness is the power of the Holy Ghost. The world we now occupy is the only theatre of the Divine Spirit's operations, the only land through which the streams of salvation flow. Probation is not so much a test of character as a test of the effects of God's truth on character. III. THAT CHARACTER WILL CONSTITUTE OUR WEAL OR WOE IN THE COMING WORLD. The text implies that your retribution, if wicked, will consist in your being wicked for ever; if filthy, in being filthy, morally polluted, for ever. Even on the supposition—a supposition which we do not admit—that there will be in the future world no elements of retribution without us, yet it is certain that we shall find them within us, if unforgiven and unholy. These elements are stored up in every guilty man's bosom. They are not now in full play. In this world of mercy they are under restraint. They sometimes haunt and harass the transgressor here. In the world to come, these materials of vengeance will be let loose upon him without check or hindrance of any kind. It is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive fully the difference between your feelings when revelling in mirth and sin, and your feelings afterwards when you come to reflect upon your conduct. Presently, however, you are cast on a bed of sickness, where you lie languishing and miserable. Companions are gone. The light of enjoyment has fled. Memory is busy recounting the past, looking back on the scene so glad some. Oh, what a different aspect does it wear in the retrospect! Reflection turns it into agony. Your body may be racked with pain, but there is a keener, deeper, intenser anguish—anguish of mind. So intolerable does this become in some men that refuge is sought in self-destruction. If, then, by the united action of memory and conscience all this anguish and agony may be produced here in a world where there are so many restraints and alleviations, where mercy lifts her banner to allure the guiltiest, and where the hope of salvation sheds its radiance upon the most depraved, how much more terrific will these engines of torture become in a world where there are no restraints, no alleviations! By every transgression you are treasuring up wrath. Your own guilty hand has already gathered an awful store, and yet you go on accumulating. God in His mercy holds it from falling. It is suspended by the gracious interposition of the Mediator. But when the border line is crossed, when probation is over and the reign of mercy closed, voices shall be heard ringing through the universe, the voice of violated law, the voice of abused mercy, the voice of despised love, "In the name of the Holy Trinity cut all loose." Then the storehouse of memory and conscience will be thrown open. The pent-up vengeance, the accumulations of your guilty life, will fall upon you and overwhelm you. Then there is the idea of being associated with those who are actuated by the same passions, and that for ever. There are neighbourhoods known to be so notoriously bad, so infested with base and dangerous characters, that you would not dare to enter them alone even in the day-time. If there be so much dread of approaching such characters here, with all the vigilance of police and the restraints of law, what must it be in a world where all the wicked in the universe are gathered together, without any of the restraints of conscience, or of the Holy Spirit, or of law, where they shall know no law but their own guilty passions, and when these passions, finding no means of gratification, must prey upon themselves and upon each other? Guilty men will need no demon tormentors in the world of retribution. Man will there be his own tormentor. His own bosom will contain materials of wrath which eternity cannot exhaust. The gloomy atmosphere of the world of retribution will thus be thronged with the visible and awful forms of your sins. You will have to live with them. They will constitute the furies that shall hunt, harass, and torment you. Escape them you cannot. The same principle applies to the reward of the good. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still." It is confirmed by your own experience that your happiness depends not on what you possess, not on circumstances, not on locality, not on friendships, not on surroundings, not so much on what you have as on what you are. The elements of my happiness are not without me but within me. It is what I am that makes me miserable or happy. Make me holy, and you make me happy.

Leave me in my guilt and sin, and you leave me miserable. The redeemed will rejoice in a holy character and in the certainty that it will never more be tainted. Here you are agitated with a thousand fears lest, in a moment of weakness and unwatchfulness, the enemy should gain the advantage over you, and you should forfeit your righteousness: but there you will be for ever redeemed from all such fears by the gracious declaration of your Lord, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: he that is holy, let him be holy still." You have seen the dewdrop trembling on the blade of grass, and glittering with varied hues in the morning light. The sun rises and kisses it away. It seems lost and irrecoverable. Not so. That dewdrop has disappeared, but it is not destroyed. It is in safe keeping. It is held in trust by the faithful atmosphere, and will descend in dew again upon the earth when and where most needed. So God treasures up every good thing that you have done, or said, or felt, or thought for Him and His great Name. You have sown purity and you shall reap it. God will reward you according to what you have done in the body. Now, what more shall we say unto you? If it be true that you are at this moment occupying the only world where character may be changed and where regenerating forces are in operation, how important that you should come to a right decision at once, this very moment. (*Richard Roberts.*)

Moral character becoming unalterable.—I. If it is not altered before death it is not likely to be altered at death. There is no opportunity afforded at death for such a work as this. II. If it is not altered before death it is not likely to be altered by death. There is no tendency in bodily changes to effect spiritual reformation. Such changes in the body are constantly going on here. Wrong moral principles and habits do not pass away from us as the particles of our body depart day after day and year after year. III. If it is not altered before death it is not likely to be altered after death. 1. A change in moral character can only be effected by the force of moral truth. 2. We cannot conceive of moral truth in a mightier form than we have it here. 3. The longer the force of truth is resisted the less likely is it to succeed. (*Homilist.*)

Permanence of character.—These words are usually applied to the future state, and properly so. They also refer to this present life, as seen in the fact that character is permanent; that along the same lines we have hitherto progressed we shall in all human probability continue to go. 1. Notice, in confirmation of this statement, the small number of reformations from evil practices. Where one does return multitudes never leave the husks of sin and come to their Father's house. 2. Notice how few enter an evil course late in life. Prison reports show the inmates to begin their crooked ways between ten and fifteen years of age. One criminal traced his career of sin back to childhood when he pilfered a few pennies. 3. The conservatism of age is another. The moral character which one has attained at thirty-five is a trustworthy index of what he will be to the end. Every year you delay becoming a Christian helps to fix you in indifference, and render conversion less and less probable. 4. Certain duties grow out of these facts. (1) The duty of forming the character of those who are in a plastic state. (2) The duty of forming our own characters. (3) Do not shrink from these duties as being too heavy to perform. You must meet them. If you shirk them they remain for ever neglected, and at your peril. To doubt is disloyal, to falter is to sin. (*C. F. Thwing.*)

The sunward side of habit.—One of our quaint earlier English poets sings—

"We are but farmers of ourselves, yet may
If we can stock ourselves and thrive, uplay
Much good treasure for the great rent-day."

It is a great thing to have mighty forces working for you instead of against you, so enabling you "to uplay much good treasure for the great rent-day." Mr. Emerson puts the matter well: "The water drowns ship and sailor like a grain of dust; but trim your bark, and the wave which drowned it will be cloven by it, and carry it like its own foam, a plume and a power." But there are certain vast moral forces at work within every one of us, which make life if they be working for us; which make death if they work against us. Habit is such a moral force. Think of the laws controlling habit. 1. "Habit diminishes feeling and increases activity"—e.g., the empire of a musician over an instrument. At first all sorts of feelings against—dislike of practice, inability to deftly use the fingers, &c.; and also only slow and laboured activity both of mind and body. But when the empire has been established, all these hindering feelings have been overcome, and activity has become so

easy as to be almost spontaneous. 2. "Habit tends to become permanent and to exclude the formation of other habits." (1) See, then, what a boon it is if a man get this force of habit working in him and for him on the side of righteousness and nobleness! Habit of pure thinking and feeling. Habit of prayer. Habit of Bible-reading. Habit of church-going. Habit of a scrupulous integrity. Habit of steadily seeking to please and test things by the Lord Christ. Habit of testimony for Jesus. (2) But if you are bound by evil habits and so have this great force working against you instead of for you, break at once their force by one grand volition for Christ, and He will impart power. The legend on the banner of John Hampden's regiment in the battle of Englishmen's rights against a law-breaking Stuart dynasty, tells the way into the breaking of bad habits and into the possession of habits' sunward side. On one side the banner was written, "God with us"; on the other side, "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum*"—no steps backward. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *Truth and its results on character*:—The direct bearing of this statement is that of an argument for the writing and publishing of these revelations, and the holding of them up to the view of all men, over against the non-effect or ill-effect they may have upon the wicked and unbelieving, or upon the Antichrist and his adherents, who is emphatically the unjust and unclean one. Though "wicked men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," and even wrest what is herein predicted of them as if it were a license for their wickedness or a fixing of it by an irresistible necessity, and so are only the more encouraged and urged on in their injustice and abominations; still, this is not to prevent the freest and fullest proclamation of the whole truth. Let the unjust one be the more confirmed in his unbelief and wickedness—let the filthy one go on in his idolatries and moral defilement with all the greater hardihood and blasphemy—that is not to restrain the making known of what shall come to pass. If it accelerates the antichristian development, and the wicked are only the more indurated in their wickedness, let it so be. Though the sun breed pestilence and death in the morasses, and only hasten putrefaction in what is lifeless and rotten, it must not therefore be blotted from the heavens, or hindered from shining into our world. There is another side to the question. If it is an ill thing to what is ill, the life of what is living requires it. Believers must be forewarned and forearmed, or they too will be deceived and perish. And if the wicked are made the wicked, the righteous and holy will be the holier, and without it cannot be defended and kept as they need to be. Therefore, let not this holy book be sealed up, nor its grand prophecies shut off from the fullest record and the most unreserved proclamation. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The stereotyping of human character*:—There comes a time—there will come a time to each one of us—when, whatever we are, that we shall be; when the seal of permanence will be set upon the spiritual condition; when the unjust man shall be unjust for ever, and the righteous man shall be for ever righteous. I know of nothing more serious, in itself more alarming, than this reflection. There is no one now living in sin who does not intend at some future time to turn from it and be saved. And we all have great reliance upon the power of the human will. We all think that what we are we are because we choose so to be; and, at all events, that what we wish to be in the future we can be and we shall be. And we know from God's Word that we are to a great extent dealt with on this supposition (Psa. xc. 7, 8; Ezek. xviii. 32). And we know that in early years there is a great susceptibility of impressions. A death in a family, a sin discovered and punished, nay, a single sermon, has often, in God's hands, changed the course of a young life from evil to good. And it is so both ways. A particular companionship, casual in its origin, has led a young person into folly or worse than folly: the companionship is broken off as casually as it was formed; the snare is broken with it, and the young life delivered. And we observe a wonderful versatility and changeableness in that part of life. From year to year, almost from week to week, we have seen a vicissitude and an alteration. One week thoughtful, diligent, exemplary; the next week trifling, idle, troublesome. One month an attentive hearer, a reverent worshipper; the next month uninterested in the things of God; a listless and languid listener; a careless, indifferent, almost profane, member of the congregation. Thus the experience of one part of life seems almost to encourage the hope that the unjust man may not be for ever unjust for ever; almost to suggest the fear that the righteous man may not be for ever righteous. And we cling to that hope, for others and for ourselves. I may spend, we say, forty or fifty years in sin and ungodliness, and yet have twenty or thirty years for faith and calling upon God. And the Christian minister, and the Christian man knows, indeed, no such thing as a limit or a terminus of God's

mercy and of God's grace. But we feel that there is also a truth, and a very solemn and needful truth, on the side of the text which speaks of the permanence, of the unchangeableness, of human character. Yes, for one man who changes, a thousand change not. They pass on through life, and they end it even as they began. He who in childhood was a spoilt and wayward child, he who in boyhood was an idle and self-willed boy, he who in youth was a passionate and a dissolute young man, he who in manhood was a self-seeking and a worldly man, will probably be in old age an avaricious or an irreligious old man, and in the end one who has had his portion in this life, has received his good things here, and must look only for evil things hereafter. The experience of life as a whole does not encourage the hope of many sudden changes, of many reversals of character, of many bad beginnings and good endings. As a general rule, the unjust man will be unjust still, and the righteous and holy will be holy and righteous still. But, at all events, this will be true at a certain point, after a certain time. The connection of the words before us shows that it will be so as the end draws on; when Christ's coming is instant there will be no change in human character. When the last conflict once sets in there will be no room and no time for changing sides. When the armies are once marshalled for their final encounter, there will be no fresh desertions and no new enlistments. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *What a man takes into the other world*:—If we look at it truly, his past life is just the one thing that a man does take with him when he dies. He takes himself. And that self is the product of all his past experience and action. As an oak bears in itself the results of every shower that through long years has freshened it, of every gale that has toughened it or stripped its boughs, of the sunshine that has fed it, and the drought that has parched it; so a man, when he stands at the end of life, is what he has been made by all his joys and sufferings and actions. That is what he takes into the other world—his own character. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christian character not gained in sickness*:—"One should think," said a friend to the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson, "that sickness and the view of death would make men more religious." "Sir," replied Johnson, "they do not know how to go to work about it. A man who has never had religion before no more grows religious when he is sick than a man who has never learned figures can count when he has need of calculation." *Character and crises*:—Conduct is always reaching crises and entering upon its consequences. It may be cumulative in degree, and reach crises more and more marked; it may at last reach a special crisis which shall be the judgment when the soul shall turn to the right or left of eternal destiny. (*T. T. Munger, D.D.*) *Finality in character*:—When the future life begins every man will see Christ as He is, and the sight of Him may of itself bring a finality to his character and destiny, as it discovers each man fully to himself. (*President Porter.*) *Deeds and destiny*:—Sow an act and you will reap a habit; sow a habit and you will reap a character; sow a character and you will reap a destiny. (*W. M. Thackeray.*) *Death fixes character*:—The hour of death may be fitly likened to that celebrated picture in the National Gallery, of Perseus holding up the head of Medusa. That head turned all persons into stone who looked upon it. There is a warrior represented with a dart in his hand; he stands stiffened, turned into stone, with the javelin in his fist. There is another with a poignard beneath his robe, about to stab; he is now the statue of an assassin, motionless and cold. Another is creeping along stealthily, like a man in ambuscade, and there he stands a consolidated rock; he has looked only upon that head, and he is frozen into stone. Such is death. What I am when death is held before me, that I must be for ever. When my spirit departs, if God finds me hymning His praise, I shall hymn it in heaven; if He finds me breathing out oaths, I shall follow up those oaths in hell. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *I come quickly; and My reward is with Me.*—*The coming of Christ*:—Learn hence—1. That the notices of our Lord's coming are usually, in Scripture, ushered in with great solemnity, with a mark of attention and observation. "Behold!" (Jude 7). 2. That the special distribution of rewards and punishments is reserved till the second coming and appearance of Jesus Christ; "My reward is with Me, to give to every man according to his work." 3. That it is our wisdom and duty to represent, by actual and solemn thoughts, the certain and speedy coming of Christ to the righteous judgment of the world. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *To give every man according as his work shall be.*—*Work appointed and rewarded by Christ*:—"The modern majesty," says Carlyle, "consists in work. What a man can do is his greatest ornament, and he always consults his dignity by doing it." I. CHRIST APPOINTS EVERY CHRISTIAN'S

WORK. 1. Each has his own work to do for Christ. 2. Each must receive the appointment from Christ Himself. 3. Each one, therefore, is responsible to Christ alone. II. CHRIST, RETURNING, BRINGS WITH HIM EVERY MAN'S REWARD. "Behold!" A call to attention, energy, and eager expectation. The startling character of this announcement—"Behold, I come quickly." When Christ comes He will bring every man's reward or recompense. His clear knowledge of the life and work of each of the vast multitude. The reward will be in proportion to the work done. (*Samuel B. Stribling.*) *Man meeting his actions again:*—In the province of Amherst, in Burmah, the foresters cut down the teak wood far up the country, then cast their logs into the river and let them float down the stream. In some instances they will float two hundred miles, when they are caught by a cable stretched across the river. They are then brought ashore and stored. When the foresters come down, every man knows his logs by his own private mark. Such are all our labours and actions. They are so many logs cast upon the stream of time and floated on to eternity. When we reach the judgment seat of Christ we shall find them each presenting the characteristic mark we have stamped upon it. (*Chas. Graham.*)

I am Alpha and Omega.—*Alpha and Omega:*—I. BRING CERTAIN TRUTHS TO THE TEXT. 1. Our Lord may well be described as the Alpha and Omega in the sense of rank. He is Alpha, the first, the chief, the foremost, the first-born of every creature, the eternal God. But though our blessed Lord is thus Alpha—the first—He was once in His condescension made Omega, the last. Marshal the creatures of God in their order, in the dread day when Jesus hangs upon the Cross, and you must put Him for misery, for weakness, for shame as the last, the Omega. 2. Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega in the book of Holy Scripture. 3. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the great law of God. The law of God finds not a single letter in human nature to meet its demands. You and I are neither Alpha nor Omega to the law, for we have broken it altogether. We have not even learned its first letter—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and certain I am we know but very little of the next—"thy neighbour as thyself." But if you would see the law fulfilled, look to the person of our blessed Lord and Master. II. Now we will take the text itself, and show what are

THE TRUTHS WHICH WE ASSUREDLY BELIEVE TO BE IN IT. 1. Our Lord Jesus is Alpha and Omega in the great alphabet of being. Reckon existences in their order, and you begin—"In the beginning was the Word." Proceed to the conclusion. What then? What is the Omega? Why assuredly Jesus Christ would still be "God over all, blessed for ever. Amen." 2. Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega in the alphabet of creating operations. Who was it that began to make? Not an angel, for the angel must first be made. Did matter create itself? Was there an effect without a cause? It is contrary to our experience and our reason to believe any such thing. The first cause stands first, and the first cause is God in the Divine Trinity, the Son being one Person of that Trinity. He is Alpha because His hand first of all winged angelic spirit, and made His ministers a flame of fire. As He alone began, so His power maintains the fabric of creation; all things consist by Him. If this world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, He shall roll it up; if the stars shall wither, it shall be at Jesu's bidding. He shall do it all, even until the end shall come, for He is Omega as well as Alpha. 3. Christ is Alpha and Omega in all covenant transactions. Everywhere the Lord Jesus is to be considered not as the friend of a day, or our Saviour only in His life on earth, but as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the anointed Mediator set up from everlasting days. 4. Jesus Christ is certainly Alpha and Omega in all salvation work as it becomes apparent in act and deed. If you have been led to know your own emptiness—if you have received from His Spirit a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness, go not to the law; look not within; but come to the Alpha, drink and be satisfied. If, on the other hand, life is near its close; if you have been preserved in holiness; if you have been kept in righteousness, remember still to trust in the Omega; for these words follow—"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." III. A FEW

THINGS WHICH FLOW OUT OF THE TEXT. 1. Sinner, saint, let Jesus be Alpha and Omega to thee to-day in thy trust. 2. If you have trusted Him, let Him be Alpha and Omega in your love. 3. Surely He should be the Alpha and Omega of our life's end and aim. What is there worth living for but Christ? 4. He should be the Alpha and Omega of all our preaching and teaching. If you leave out Christ, you have left the sun out of the day, and the moon out of the night; you have left the waters out of the sea, and the floods out of the river; you have left the harvest

out of the year, the soul out of the body; you have left joy out of heaven, yea, you have robbed all of its all. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Christ the Alpha and Omega*:—This declaration is made of Jesus Christ. It is oft-repeated in this book to give it emphasis. It indicates the supremacy and absolute government of the Redeemer-God. All creatures, all things, all relations and dispensations have their source in Him, and will find their end in Him. I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE REAL ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE PRESENT ORDER OF THINGS. He is over it all, and in it all, and the life of it all, and the genius of it all, and the substance and end of it all. By right of office the headship and kingship of it belong to Him. Before any creature or world existed, the eternal "Alpha" was. He is the "Everlasting Father," as Isaiah styles Him—the Father of all the angels in heaven, as well as of all mankind. Creative power begins with and ends in Him. Providence is the executor of His will. Redemption underlies all the arrangements, counsels, and purposes of God. Here is our confidence. The Gospel promise cannot fail, for it is the word of Him who abideth for ever, the will of Him who is supreme over all, and the work of Him who made the earth and the stars. II. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF ALL THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS MADE TO THE CREATURES OF GOD. We have in the material universe a most wonderful manifestation of God. All His natural attributes are thereby brought to light, and we are confronted with Deity. But the light of nature affords but an imperfect and uncertain idea of God. His moral perfections are His chief glory, and nature reveals nothing of these. It is the plan and work of human redemption which most clearly and signally makes God known to man, and even to angels. This work has Christ's mediation for its basis, Christ's atonement for its grand expression, and the Holy Spirit as its efficient agent. To accomplish it all power has been given to Christ, and all creatures, and all things in heaven and on earth are made subservient to Him. Not that Christ is a mere manifestation of God. He is as distinctly a person as the Father. But it is in Christ only that God speaks, shines forth, acts. The glory of the Godhead shines for us only in the face of Jesus Christ. We see in Him God's moral perfections as well as His natural attributes. The goodness and mercy and holiness and justice of God find fearful expression in the person and work of the incarnated One. III. CHRIST IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. He is the central character, the life, the essence, the burden, and the substance of them. To set forth Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life, is their chief end. He is the first promise of mercy made to man, and equally the last. His office, work, and history are blended and interwoven with the whole structure of revelation. IV. CHRIST IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF MAN'S SALVATION. Christ is the finisher of our salvation as well as its author. He completes whatsoever He begins. He never leaves or forsakes one who has felt His pardoning mercy, until he is safe in heaven. He will wash out the last stain of guilt from the soul, conquer the last enemy, and present us faultless before His Father's throne with exceeding glory. V. CHRIST IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE LIFE OF GOD IN THE SOUL OF THE BELIEVER. By nature we are dead in sin, and no will or power of man can give us life. Christ is our life. He only has power to raise us up from the death of sin; to keep us alive; to cause us to grow in grace, and assimilate us to the character of God. VI. CHRIST IS THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE SAINTS' FINAL GLORY. Heaven is the culmination of Christ's power and of Gospel blessedness. Then will it be made manifest that Jesus Christ is indeed "the Alpha and Omega" of God's eternal government; the head of all creatures; the end of all manifestations; the substance of all things; the glory of all economies; the fountain of all being. 1. We infer from this subject that Jesus Christ is an indispensable necessity to every one of us. For it is only in Him that we attain to the real end of our being. 2. How real and how fearful is the sin of living away life and probation aside from the service and glory of Jesus Christ. (J. M. Sherwood.) *Christ, the Alpha and Omega*:—That it is Christ who here speaks, no one can doubt. The words that immediately precede separate the speaker from every created angel: "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." These words involve a claim to Deity. This is given in the Old Testament as a title of Jehovah, distinguishing Him from the idols of paganism (Isa. xlv. 6). I. Christ is the Alpha and Omega IN RELATION TO CREATION AND PROVIDENCE. Christianity is at this day the great upholder of Theism in the world. It has unspeakably distanced Judaism. But Christianity is more than the witness of simple Theism. There is a trinity in its unity, and this gives it

a richness, a grandeur, an adaptability to the fallen state of man of which mere Theism is incapable. Hence the Son shines in the Christian firmament as the true God, along with the Father and the Holy Ghost; and thus the Divine works of Creation and Providence are connected with His name. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." There is a grandeur in the Scripture doctrine of Creation to which even science and philosophy, however reason also teach it, find it hard to rise. Much of the professed Theism of our day runs into Pantheism by lifting up the Creation to something like the Divine level, or losing itself in some ascending series without a true summit. But Scripture gives to God the glory of this truly Divine work, without either lifting the creature too far in the scale, or separating the divinity unduly from it. And thus, while it guards true Theism by the doctrine of Creation, it further guards it by making God create all things by Jesus Christ. But while we ever thus claim, and even reclaim Creation for Christ, not less Providence also; for the one involves the other. The system of things, though by law and order it makes a system, cannot be left without the special control of its Author; and thus we are told of the Saviour, that He "upholdeth all things by the word of His power," and that "in Him all things consist." He who is the Creator and Upholder must also be the Last End of all things, the Omega as well as the Alpha, though nothing greater is said of our Lord in the whole Bible; and thus the whole from first to last hangs together. II. I am thus led to speak of Christ as the Alpha and Omega IN RELATION TO REDEMPTION. We feel at first as if there were a contraction of horizon when we turn from the vast realm of Creation and Providence to that of Redemption. But this impression is soon corrected. Rather Creation and Providence are like the stage on which the great events of sacred history, which is the centre of all histories, are to be transacted. 1. I remark then that Christ is the Alpha and Omega in regard to Redemption as a Divine saving plan. We cannot ascend to the origin of this plan; for it is from eternity. But as far as we can rise, Christ is seen to be its fountain-head, and with His purpose of devotion it is bound up. "Lo, I come! In the volume of the book it is written of Me; I delight to do Thy will, O My God; Thy law is within my heart." This is a starting-point, where Christ comes forth as the Alpha in His Divine purpose. He was the author of the patriarchal dispensation. Its scattered promises, then few and far between, were presented like early stars by His hand. Its humble altars and simple sacrifices rose at His word, and He appeared in person to Enoch and to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Mosaic dispensation was also full of Him. Moses and all the prophets spoke as they were moved by His Spirit dwelling in them. All the types and shadows that foretold His saving work had Himself for their author. And as He was thus the Alpha of this Old Testament dispensation that stretched in successive forms through thousands of years, so was He bound to be its Omega. What would it all have signified without Him? Its prophecies would have remained fruitless divinations; its types a heap of riddles. But it became Him to fulfil it; and when the fulness of the time was come, He appeared as the Omega of the Old Testament economy; and at the same time the Alpha of the New. "Let us look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." Let us rejoice with joy unspeakable, that He who was the Alpha of our redemption became the Omega too. Now He is beyond, and we are beyond, that awful darkness. "It is finished!" Let us not lower His work and misunderstand it, while at the same time we unduly exalt our own by speaking as if Christ's sacrifice belonged to the same category with ours. Then had He died not to end sacrifice, but to begin it, and stand at the head of a long line of sufferers taking away sin out of the world by essentially the same endurance with His. But He is alone! "His blood shed," as ours never can be, "for remission of sins unto many." 2. I remark that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Redemption as a personal Christian experience. When is it that any one of us becomes a Christian? Is it not when Christ Himself draws near, and talks with us, as with the disciples on the way? We have no experimental Christianity apart from Him. He is the Alpha of our personal religious history. We may seem to ourselves to have begun this work; but Christ has begun it before us. For this opening of hearts, what is it but the result of His unlocking of them? But with Christ all originates. If we are pardoned, it is because we have redemption through His blood—even the forgiveness of sins; if we are restored to God's family, it is because that to as many as receive Him He gives the privilege of becoming the sons of God. If we are washed and sanctified as well as justified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. We can trace no

part of it back to ourselves, or to any other benefactor; for we see and feel that, like bread of life, it comes from heaven. This is the deepest spirit of all Christian experience. Our theologies may be somewhat different, but our doxologies are one. Thus is it with the first grand experience of converting and saving grace; but not less does Christ blend and mingle with all the succeeding experiences of the Christian's history. He gently smooths the steps of every pilgrim in the ways of holiness. He suffers not the smoking flax to be quenched, or the bruised reed to be broken. In temptation Christ is a defence to the Christian, in darkness a light. What is Christian experience but this secret history of the affections of the soul towards an ever-present Saviour? He outgrows his childhood and youth, forgetting many things as things behind. He forsakes the books which once he loved, the studies from which he was inseparable. But time itself cannot antiquate his attachment to his Saviour. We know the Alpha of our earthly friendships, but we do not know their Omega. We bless God for our good hope that they will stand and comfort us in the last extremity. But in regard to Christ we have more than probability; we have persuasion. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities," &c. 3. I remark that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Redemption as a collective spiritual history. Christianity was never intended to be a solitary experience, or a multitude of single experiences. It was to be a society—a Church. Was it not a great thing in Christ to be the Alpha of such a society; to build it upon a foundation already laid, and yet to make it far more spiritual, energetic, and wide-embracing; to enlarge its statute-book by adding a New Testament to the Old. Christ stands forth as the Alpha of this new creation, such as had never been seen in the world before—visible in doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, and yet invisible, because having its deepest seat in the hidden man of the heart, with more of its members in heaven than on earth, and more in the future than now alive. He was the seed-corn, falling into the ground and dying, which brought forth all this fruit. As we read the Acts of the Apostles, the sequel to the Gospels is evident to all—the same Christ in a new sphere, His name working signs and wonders on the souls, and still also on the bodies, of men, living virtue going out of Him—the bread blessed and feeding thousands—the "great multitude obedient to the faith." The earthly leaders visibly do not lead. They point to One above—and their dying charge renews the battle, "Remember Jesus Christ." Thus will Christ be the Alpha of His Church till He becomes the Omega. It is a work "never ending, still beginning." Christ has to cope with the multiplication of the human race, born in sin, and needing fresh grace. He has to cope with backsliding and apostasy;—with superstition, heresy, and infidelity;—with all the devices and depths of Satan. 4. I remark in the last place, that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Redemption, considered as an endless development. When we speak of eternity we feel that we are dealing with a quantity which, whether as applied to man's natural endowment or destiny in Christ, overtasks all our powers alike of conception and description. He is thus the Alpha of the everlasting ages, the morning star that leads in the endless day! Specially to the ransomed themselves is Christ the Alpha of the Christian heaven. He has prepared the place; He has provided the company; He has measured out alike the rest and the activity; He has diffused the love. A blessedness like this, inaugurated by Christ, and quickened by His presence, can only begin, but never end. And thus Christ may be said to be the Omega of the heavenly world, as He is its Alpha. He has united its beginning and its ending as in a golden circle. He has so gloriously consummated the being of the redeemed, that it can endure for ever without exhaustion or decay, without change or reconstruction. He has so wondrously built the celestial system, that it can supply themes of endless interest and ever-increasing joy. And in Himself He has so concentrated all that makes heaven blissful and ennobling, that its riches must remain for ever riches that are "unsearchable," and its glory, a glory "to be revealed." Who is there that would resist the attraction of the person, work, and saving grace of that great Being, whose glories I have feebly endeavoured to shadow forth? Before you reject this Saviour think how you will face eternity without Him! Oh, rather embrace His favour while the day of mercy lasts! There Christ shall become the Alpha of your salvation; and the depths of your never-ending existence shall not witness the day that He shall withdraw His love. (*J. Cairns, D.D.*) *The place of Christ in Christianity*:—If our religion is to come from the New Testament, Christ must have a place in it which no other can share. God's forgiveness does not come to us independent of Christ, past Him, over His head, so that we can count Him as

one of those who best knew and most fully proclaimed an unimaginable mercy, which would have been all that it is even had He never lived; it comes only in Him, and through His death for our sins. That this is the distinctively Christian position is clearly seen by those who have been brought up in other religions. An interesting illustration of this was given some time ago in India. A Hindu Society was formed which had for its object to appropriate all that was good in Christianity without burdening itself with the rest. Among other things which it appropriated, with the omission of only two words, was the answer given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism to the question, "What is repentance unto life?" Here is the answer: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience." The words the Hindus left out were "in Christ"; instead of "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ," they read simply "apprehension of the mercy of God." But they knew that this was not compromising. They were acute enough to see that in the words they left out the whole Christianity of the definition lay; they felt that here was the barb of the hook, and as they had no intention of being caught, they broke it off. (*J. Denny, D.D.*) *Christ the Omega*:—Christ is the close and climax of history. Christ is, we believe, the innermost word that God will speak. Christianity must always claim finality for the revelation that comes through Him. (*H. Scott-Holland, M.A.*) **Blessed are they that do His commandments.**—*The blessedness of keeping the commandments*:—The commandments of God are the laws of happiness. They are the rules of health both for soul and body. There can be no well-being on earth, and no heaven without them. We have too long been in the habit of thinking that goodness is only good because God has commanded it, and evil would be good, or at least very pleasant, if it had not been forbidden. We have not regarded goodness as the indispensable means of happiness, just as much as breath is to life, labour to success, or water to steam. The commandments are the laws of goodness. They are summed up by our Lord into two (*Matt. xxii. 36-40*). Here are the essential laws of happiness. Society constituted upon them must be happy. Let love to God fill the heart, inspire the intellect, and pervade every thought, and we walk as the friends of the Lord. We exult in our heavenly Father's goodness (*Isa. xlviii. 18*). The Lord is to the soul like the sun to the solar system. From Him come the warmth, the brightness, and the fertility which beautify and bless the soul. It is as vain to expect a bright or a happy mind where love to God is not, as to expect a bright or a cheerful world without the sun. And hence, the Divine command is not an arbitrary decree. It is the condition of our well-being. Nothing can dispense with it (*Deut. xxxii. 46, 47*). Let us consider a little in detail the commandments in relation to God. But first let us notice that they are addressed to those who have come out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. When the soul, wearied with the tyranny of sin, receives the help offered by its Saviour, He proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-house to them that were bound. He strikes the fetters from the slave of his sins, and gives to His delivered servant the glorious liberty of the children of light. None but these can keep the commandments, or desire to do so. Hence, they are addressed to such. He is the First and the Last. He who comes to Him will find rest unto his soul. Ambition is a fearful idol. We watch its worshipper giving himself to its absorbing anxieties, to engross all his faculties, that he may achieve success. The merchant has become a millionaire, and is insane. Such is the result of worshipping the likeness of things on the earth. It is the same when we bow down to and serve an image or likeness of anything in the waters under the earth. Spiritual fish are those appetites for science which delight in the waters of knowledge. The world of thought is a wide sea. The thoughts of the worldly are as a vast troubled sea (*Isa. lvii. 20*). Only where the glorious river and streams of Divine truth flow can the sanctified sciences, the true fish of the soul, really live. Not a small history would that be which detailed the sorrows of scientific men when their science has not been made sober and sacred by being subordinated to heavenly wisdom. One eminent man, after waiting in vain for a king's smile, in France, went and died of chagrin. Another committed suicide because the British Association had not awarded him sufficient honour for his chemical discoveries. And what a world of suffering does such a termination disclose! To make life a circle of blessing it must begin and end with God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To form this first indispensable element for happiness, the

Lord, from His infinite love to us, is a jealous God. He requires our worship not for His sake, but ours. He needs nothing of ours, but we need Him. He watches, with unutterable tenderness, to preserve us from the hell of existence in the wild chaos of being in which He is not the supreme centre and the supreme law. He is jealous with an infinite and holy jealousy, to preserve each child from danger and from ruin. But He warns us, also, that ruin to one generation involves danger to the next. In His wisdom He has connected the race together like the links of a chain, so that the progress of one generation may transmit better qualities to another, and thus the race be ever advancing to a higher degree of talent, of order, and happiness. The wealth, mental as well as physical, is thus transmitted to the future generations of mankind. This law, however, when perverted, works in the opposite direction. The iniquity of the father is visited upon the son. It must be so. The order of nature is not suspended. It works inversely, because man will have it so, but it exists. He, therefore, who would know the extent of the wrong he does when he sins, should reflect, not only on its consequences to himself, but on the hereditary evil he transmits to his children. They are, it is true, not punished for it, but it gives them a proneness to actual evils for which they will be punished. The first three commandments are the head and essence of the whole. They fill the rest with spiritual life. Without them the rest are dead and unavailing. The first three relate to spiritual life, the next five to the conduct of man in civil society, and the remaining two to his moral life and motives. Here permit me to draw your attention to the interesting circumstances recorded in the Gospel, respecting the young man who came to inquire of the Lord what he must do to inherit eternal life. The Saviour supplied what the young man was lacking—the essence of the first three commandments, which he had in reality not done. Here, again, we see the blessedness of keeping the Divine laws. The young man, though rich, and in many respects estimable; though in the sight of the world worthy of admiration, and to some an object of envy, was unhappy. He felt there was a void within, which no outward possessions, or even the moral law alone, could fill. God must be enthroned there: He must be the tree of life in the centre of the garden, or there will be no paradise. No one can have that confidence which is essential to happiness who is not resting on the Rock of Ages; no one has a right to have it; no one has a right to enjoy himself in the universe who does not render homage to its Great Proprietor. But when a man devotes himself to the Lord, a peace inexpressible takes possession of his soul—a bright dawn, like that of a morning in spring, breaks in upon him, and all things laugh and sing. It is the kingdom of heaven come nigh unto him: it is heaven begun. We will now notice the commandments which relate to civil life, that is, in the letter, for in the spiritual sense we must ever bear in mind they all relate to operations in the soul, and to our supreme obedience to the Lord, and the rejection of internal evils as sins against Him; in this sense the commandments are exceedingly broad (Psa. cxix. 96). We need scarcely remark how miserable are the homes where the parents are not respected; what insolences, what contempt, what slights of parental counsel, what jealousies of the rest of the family, take away satisfaction from the children, and make a perpetual source of discomfort to the parents. But, on the contrary, how blessed is the home where father and mother are honoured! Confidence in their loving hearts is felt. Mutual kindness weaves continually garlands of spiritual roses. Let us take another commandment: "Thou shalt not commit murder." Who could possibly be happy while violating this? Even in the lighter form, in which the act is not committed, but, as the Lord teaches in the gospel, a person hates another, there is no possibility of happiness. Hate takes away peace from the heart where it dwells; it forms a brood of viperous tempers, which not only strive to injure the person hated, but also prey upon one another. The same result will follow the consideration of every other commandment. No happiness can exist except in proportion as it is from the heart obeyed. Again and again we say, How could a heaven exist where these perfect laws do not exist, or how can a breach of them result in anything but sorrow? It is the same with bearing false witness against the neighbour. An atmosphere of lies must be fraught with curses. Even the last two commandments, though externally not appearing to relate to evils so formidable to society, in reality do so most completely. Where all are covetous must be misery indeed; to feel that you were surrounded by those who envied you every comfort, who greedily watched and waited for every opportunity to despoil you. The hell of the covetous must be a real chamber of horrors, overflowing with envy and gall. On the contrary, as this spirit is shunned or subdued, a delight in imparting takes its place, a rejoicing over

another's joy. A cheerful generous outpouring of blessed influences, an intense satisfaction in the well-being of others; a watchfulness in seizing every opportunity to promote the general joy; these principles and states unlock the very portals of bliss, and give us the reason for the Divine words (Isa. xlviii. 18). Let it not be said, that in the New Testament these Divine laws are repealed, for the very reverse is the case. The Lord came to give us new power to keep the essential laws of our happiness (Matt. v. 17, 19, 20). Did the Lord's coming, death, glorification, and resurrection, give no power to follow Him in the regeneration, and to keep His commandments? Is keeping the commandments such a difficult thing that the Holy Spirit cannot enable us to do it? The apostle said, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me," and why cannot you? It is not the power you want, it is the will. Keeping the commandments does not make difficulties; it is not keeping them. Awake to righteousness, and sin not. Rouse yourself to the determination to vanquish evil, and with the Lord and His angels assisting you, the victory will be sure. (*J. Bailey, Ph.D.*) *Evangelical obedience*:—I. OBEDIENCE

MUST BE SINCERE, FLOWING FROM A RENEWED HEART, SPRINKLED FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE.

1. This obedience proceeds from faith: this is the main principle of the Christian life. 2. This obedience to the commands of God, flows also from love to Him (1 John v. 3). II. RIGHT OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD IS IMPARTIAL AND WITHOUT RESERVE. III. THE EVANGELICAL KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, IS HABITUAL, CONSTANT, PERSEVERING. IV. DOING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE COVENANT OF GRACE, IS DIRECTED TO HIS GLORY. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The reward of debt and the reward of grace*:—I. THE WORK: "Blessed are they that do His commandments." The obedience intended is that which is the fruit and offspring of a renewed nature, the obedience of the penitent believer. Every man truly turned to God echoes the sentiment, "Oh, how love I Thy law!" "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." He aspires to and labours after entire conformity to that law, as being that which constitutes the perfection of His being. II. THE REWARD: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." (*D. Kelly, M.A.*) *The blessedness of the obedient*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS HERE DECLARED TO BE BLESSED.

They do the commandments of Christ. The commandments of Christ are the revelation of the will of God. This revelation consists partly of doctrines or truths to be believed, and partly of duties to be performed. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DOING THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST AND HAVING A RIGHT TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE. And here, at the very first, it is necessary to state that we must beware of imagining that by doing the commandments we procure for ourselves a title to eternal life. The work of our salvation is, in the Word of God, ascribed to Christ, from its commencement to its close. As He suffered in our stead, so He fulfilled for us all righteousness, and left us nothing to perform—nothing, I say, to perform in the way of recommending ourselves to the favour of God; although we have unquestionably much to perform on other grounds. The persons in the text have the right, because God has declared and promised in His Word, which can never be broken, that they who possess that character which manifests itself in aiming at a holy and constant obedience to His law, shall have the right, or more properly the privilege of eating of the tree of life, and of entering in hereafter through the gates into the city. To the fulfilment of this promise it is by no means necessary that obedience and right should be connected together as cause and effect. It is at the same time perfectly true, for it is asserted repeatedly in the Bible, that the good works of the saints are rewarded by God, but then this is entirely owing to their union with Christ by faith. God may also be said to confer rewards upon us for our holy and benevolent actions, inasmuch as these actions are signs and evidences of our union with Christ, and in so doing we may consider Him as promising the reward, not on account of signs or evidences themselves, but solely on account of the thing which they signify.

III. WHEREIN CONSISTS THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHO, BY DOING THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST, ASCERTAIN THEIR RIGHT TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE, AND TO ENTER IN THROUGH THE GATES INTO THE CITY. The expression, "tree of life," is most probably figurative; but figurative though it be, it unquestionably intimates that the heavenly happiness shall be of perpetual duration, and it conveys to us this truth in a most significant and forcible manner. We shall eat of the tree of life. Think only of how much alarm and misery death is the cause in this world, and then you will be enabled, in some measure, to conceive the felicity of that other and better world in which there shall be no more death. But further, they who do the commandments of Christ shall enter in through the gates into the city, they shall be openly received

and welcomed into the city of the heavenly Jerusalem, through the regular and lawful entrance, as citizens of a place have the right and privilege of admission. A city conveys the idea of security, and comfort, and society. By its walls it protects from the assaults of enemies; by its gates it excludes whatever might hurt, or offend, or incommode; and by the number of those who live within it, united together by sameness of interests, laws, language, religion, and manners, it puts us in possession of all the gratifications which flow from society and friendly intercourse. As the happiness of the redeemed shall be endless in duration, so also shall it be uninterrupted and without diminution. (*A. Bullock, M.A.*) That they may have right to the tree of life.—*The tree of life* (with Gen. iii. 24):—I. THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE GARDEN OF INNOCENCE. This picture supplies us with two important facts. One is that primitive man was not at all handicapped in his first moral struggle by any circumstances arising out of the manner of his creation. There does not seem to be any reason in the nature of things, or in the nature of man as he was originally constituted, why he should of necessity have disaster and defeat as pre-conditions of ultimate victory. The tree of life was there in the garden within possible reach, and if man had conquered instead of being conquered, no cherubim could have prevented his tasting of this ambrosial fruit and so entering into life. It is true that conflict is necessary in passing from innocence to virtue, but conflict is not necessarily defeat. There is the nobler alternative of victory, which was exemplified by the second Adam, the Son of Man, who fought over again the battle of humanity, and won it from first to last. So we are led to another fact that man's first moral action constituted a real failure, that there occurred in the beginning of human history a veritable moral "fall." The tree of life in the garden of innocence is no meaningless figure. It reveals what might have been if man had been victorious in Eden. The splendid prize here forfeited serves already to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin. II. THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE GARDEN OF GUILT. How, then, are we to translate the symbolic picture of the cherubim guarding with the sword of flame the tree of life from the approach of guilty man into every-day prose? It is simply the symbolic representation of the fulfilment of the law—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." The fact of guilt has shut man off from the life that had lain before him in his state of innocence as a glorious possibility. This once more emphasises the fact that sin was a real, and in itself an unmitigated disaster. The symbolic picture of the tree surrounded by strong cherubim reveals man's impotence to regain unaided what he had lost. No sin-defiled soul can challenge the dread cherubim, or tempt the blazing stroke of the awful sword, and live. Yet already the promise was given of One who, on behalf of poor humanity, should cleave His way through the fiery guard of righteousness to the tree of life, and lead thither many of earth's baffled children, who should be victors in His victory, and strong in His strength. III. THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE CITY OF REDEMPTION: "Blessed are they that wash their robes." The kingdom of Life revealed in John's Revelation is a kingdom of Redemption, of which a Lamb as it had been slain, that is, the fact and power of a great all-availing sacrifice, is the centre. So we find that the new way to the tree of life is through the sacrifice of Christ, it is trodden by those that have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. The operation here indicated is twofold. The "washing of the robes" indicates on the one hand, the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Christ. Here is one side of the curse removed; the guilty are forgiven for the sake of the Beloved. But there is also another side. The sacrifice of Christ was also a victory. This supreme sacrifice for sin involved the destruction of sin. He that died all the more gloriously lived, and became the fount of eternal life to those that trust in Him. Hence in this book we are told that the saints overcome the evil one by the blood of the Lamb. So their robes are made white, not only by the forgiving love of God which is made possible by the great Sacrifice, but also by the spiritual power that comes through the crucified Christ. So in very deed their sins are washed away, and at length they are able to "stand in the eternal Light through the eternal Love." The tree of life meets us first in a "garden," but at last in a glorious "city." So God moves on in spite of sin, and leads the world through Christ to greater glory. It is not Eden regained that God gives us. Eden was but a garden, primitive, narrow, and circumscribed, suited for a life of simple innocence with little expansion or development of capacity and power. But redemption introduces us to a noble city with its complicated claims, its vast possibilities, and its myriad grandeurs. Leaving metaphor aside, God in Christ is calling us to a life full of large and noble and varied activity. Christian

life should fill every sphere, be foremost in all true service for God and man, and reveal all the activities of life at their best. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

Right to the tree of life.—I. Now, it is hardly possible to study the Scriptural accounts without leaning to the opinion that “the tree of life,” and “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” were strictly sacramental—in other words, that as symbolical trees they did what they could never do as material. “The tree of life,” whatever were its foliage and fruit, was clearly not one of those trees which the earth had been appointed naturally to produce. Placed in the centre of the brilliant scenery of Eden, it answered purposes peculiar to itself. It is not classed among the trees good for food; and if therefore all those trees, as affording nourishment by their fruit, were trees of life, it must have been in some far different sense that this single tree was emphatically styled “the tree of life.” Besides, it should be remembered that when man had sinned by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, God gave as a reason for expelling him from Eden—“Lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever.” So that, in some way or other, immortality was to have been consequent on the eating of this tree. Indeed, there are various passages in which, as well as in our text, mention is made of “the tree of life”; and we suppose that what is intended by the figure in these later instances must have been typified by “the tree in the midst of the garden.” But when Solomon speaks of the eternal wisdom as “a tree of life”—when Christ declares to the Church of Ephesus, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God”—or when, as in our text, a blessing is pronounced on those who do God’s commandments, as having “right to the tree of life,” there can be nothing clearer than that by taking of “the tree of life” is meant a participation of that eternal life with God in heaven which Christ Jesus has merited for His followers. Therefore we seem justified in concluding that “the tree of life” in Paradise was nothing less than an instructive symbol of that Second Person in the Trinity, who in every age has been the life of the world. II. And now, assuming, as we think we may, that Christ, as represented to us in Scripture, is “the tree of life,” we pass on to consider the blessing pronounced on those who do God’s commandments—“that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Now, the persons whom the text pronounces blessed are those that do God’s commandments. The terms on which they partake of the tree of life are those of absolute right: “that they may have right to the tree of life.” Right presupposes debt, and a debt can never coexist with gift. We think, then, that we must carry with us your ready assent when we argue that forasmuch as the doing of God’s commandments which is mentioned in the text puts man into the position of having “right to the tree of life,” the supposed obedience must be something more than a mere creature obedience, even though that obedience were wrought up to an unspotted perfection. We are required, then, to search for a doing of the commandments which shall be productive of right; for if none such be discovered the pronounced blessing will have none on whom to descend. The moral law exists no longer as a covenant. It can hardly, therefore, be to obedience to the commandments of this law that the blessings are annexed. But there is a commandment peculiar to the gospel which we may obey, and obedience to which shall procure for us right. “This is His commandment,” saith St. John, “that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ”; and there is the most exact agreement between this statement and the answer of Jesus to the Jews. When they asked Him, “What shall we do to work the works of God?” Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” So that the great commandment under the gospel dispensation—a commandment which distinguishes the dispensation from the legal—is simply the commandment to believe on the Saviour. This commandment, we, though weak and insufficient, may thoroughly do—not indeed in our own strength, for “this is the work of God,” but through the power of the quickening Spirit which stirs us from the lethargy of our nature, and enables us to put faith in the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ. But if a man thus strengthened by supernatural assistance do the commandment which belongs especially to the gospel, he will certainly “have right to the tree of life.” Yes, “have right”—for the commandment requires faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and what is it which faith effects for him who is enabled to exercise it, if it be not that it incorporates him into the mystical body of the Saviour, and so causes him to appear in the sight of God as having suffered and obeyed in Christ? And thus we vindicate, as we hope, the truth that a believer, though in himself he can deserve

nothing but utter condemnation, yet in Christ may have right to all that is magnificent and glorious. He passes into the saint's rest, "a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror, through Him that loved him," angels chanting his welcome, and God Himself approving his credentials of victory. He enters, as you observe it stated in the last clause of our text, "through the gates into the city." He is not admitted, as it were, by stealth, whilst the sentinels sleep; he is not admitted by bribery, the keepers consenting to overlook the deficiencies of his passport; he is not admitted surreptitiously, through some neglected breach, or by a secret subterranean passage; but amid the blazings of Deity, and with thousand times ten thousand spirits gazing on his march as a mighty one, going forward to his right, he "enters in through the gates into the city." Who will not confess that Christ hath done marvellously in thus entailing a "right" on His followers? And who will not long to possess that faith through which the right becomes personally his own? Admire, then, and adore the Saviour, who undertook and accomplished so much. Oh, for a faith in Christ, that we may obtain the blessedness of those who do God's commandments. This is the thing wanted, the thing to be prayed for with earnestness and sincerity. Then, when we feel that we have right, how glorious will the Saviour appear! (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Right to the tree of life:—*

I. MORAL OBEDIENCE. Obedience is the moral perfection of an intelligent and responsible agent. Obedience to law was the condition of continuance in Paradise, and it is the condition of its being regained. But there are important differences in the cases. A redemptive law is essential. A redemptive provision has been made and introduced, and a propitiation made. God shows mercy in a way of righteousness; and the law of faith is related directly to that scheme and the Being who embodies it. Spiritually blessed are they who obey the law of Faith.

II. THE RIGHTS OF MAN. There are political, social, and legal rights. These are not in question here. The text refers to spiritual rights arising out of the Divine redemptive bestowments, or what is called grace. There are two great desires throbbing in the human breast—the desire for immortality, and that for a redeeming and renewing grace and love. The gospel meets both—it confers a "right to the tree of life." III. THE CELESTIAL HOME OF THE OBEDIENT BELIEVER. The home-coming of the pilgrims, and the developed, matured, perfected society to which they are introduced; their stores of knowledge, modes of intercourse, and methods of beneficent and blessed combination. The perfect worship of the city whose temple is the Lord God and the Lamb. (*John Stoughton, D.D.*) *The tree of life and the entering into the city:—*The Christian life has many features and many characteristics. This is one of them—it is a perpetual washing of the robes. No spot or stain must be suffered to remain upon them. It is a most dangerous thing to fall into the habit of letting any committed sin pass *sub silentio*, as it were, between man and his soul. Scripture, indeed, counsels no morbid self-scrutiny. The man does not wash perhaps each separate spot and stain, but it is because he washes the whole robe and them with it. In one way the tablets of memory, and the tablets of conscience, and the tablets of the life, must be sponged clean every evening; and in only one way: by what Scripture calls the Blood of the Lamb, that is, the atonement made once for all, for all sin, and applied, in earnest faith, to the individual man's heart and soul in the sight of God. Carelessness about washing the robes for pardon runs on into carelessness about washing the robes for purity. It is easy to see, for every man's experience shows it, the connection between the washing of the robes and the access to the tree of life. Let a man recall a day on which he let his sins alone in the way of notice, and in the way of sorrow, and in the way of confession, and in the way of prayer for pardon, and in the way of supplication for grace—he will recall, also, a day on which he was a stranger to God as to all peaceful communion and as to all comforting hope. This explains for all practical purposes why it should be true also, as the net result of the life, that it is they who have habitually, in this world, washed their robes, who shall have the right, in that world, of access to the tree of life. There remains yet one clause of the text, and one remarkable feature of the saints' rest and glory—"And that they may enter in through the gates into the city." All are struck, I suppose, by this thought. "Paradise Lost" was a garden, "Paradise Regained" is a city. Paradise lost was symbolised by a garden, destitute of all the disciplinary influences of the life of contradicting wills and conflicting interests. God was there; but it was as the God of Nature and Providence, not as the God of Compassion, the God of Revelation, or the God of Grace. Paradise regained is a city, even though it still has its river and its foliage, its spacious expanse, and its

beautiful scenery; it is the Great City, the Holy City. This last book of the Bible, and one other book—the Epistle to the Hebrews—have the privilege of so designating it; but the idea is in all the Epistles and in all the Gospels. Heaven is no place of luxurious repose—no state of delicious communing with a God who knows only the self-man, and the spirit that is within him. Heaven is a society, a community, and a polity. Its life is two-sided—it is a life Godward, and it is a life manward; it is a life of direct access, and it is a life of boundless love. Into that city they who have here constantly, and at last perfectly, washed their robes shall find themselves, entering by no narrow or secret postern, but, as it is here written, by the gates, through those wide and splendid portals, as the Greek expression has it, opening of their own accord to receive them, of which it is written in the earlier part of this record that at each one stands a ministering angel; and again, that the gates shall not be shut at all by day, and day only need be spoken of, for “There shall be no night there.” (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The last beatitude of the ascended Christ*:—The Revised Version reads: “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life.” There can be no doubt whatever that this reading is the correct one. “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life,” carries us back to the old law, and has no more hopeful a sound in it than the thunders of Sinai. “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life,” has the clear ring of the New Testament music about it, and is in full accord with the whole type of doctrine that runs through this book; and is not unworthy to be almost the last word that the lips of the Incarnate Wisdom spoke to men from heaven. I. IF WE ARE CLEAN IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN MADE SO. The first benediction that Jesus Christ spoke from the mountain was, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The last benediction that He speaks from heaven is, “Blessed are they that wash their robes.” And the act commended in the last is but the outcome of the spirit extolled in the first. For they who are poor in spirit are such as know themselves to be sinful men; and those who know themselves to be sinful men are they who will cleanse their robes in the blood of Jesus Christ. II. THESE CLEANSSED ONES, AND BY IMPLICATION THESE ONLY, HAVE UNRESTRAINED ACCESS TO THE SOURCE OF LIFE. The tree of life stands as the symbol here of an external source. I take “life” to be used here in what I believe to be its predominant New Testament meaning, not bare continuance in existence, but a full ideal perfection and activity of all the faculties and possibilities of the man, which this very apostle himself identifies with the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. And that life, says John, has an external source in heaven as on earth. And the source is “the tree of life.” They that wash their robes have the right of unrestrained access to Him in whose presence, in that loftier state, no impurity can live. The tree of life, according to some of the old Rabbinical legends, the tree of life lifted its branches, by an indwelling motion, high above impure hands that were stretched to touch them, and until our hands are cleansed through faith in Jesus Christ, its richest fruit hangs unreachable, golden, above our heads. Oh, the fulness of the life of heaven is only granted to them who, drawing near Jesus Christ by faith on earth, have thereby cleansed themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. III. THOSE WHO ARE CLEANSSED, AND THEY ONLY, HAVE THE ENTRANCE INTO THE SOCIETY OF THE CITY. The city is the emblem of security and of permanence. No more shall life be as a desert march, with changes which only bring sorrow, and yet a dreary monotony amidst them all. We shall dwell amid abiding realities, ourselves fixed in unchanging but ever-growing completeness and peace. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) And may enter in through the gates into the city.—*Heaven-gate; or, the passage to Paradise*:—I. THE MOTION. “Enter in.” They are blessed that enter in. Perseverance only makes happy. Some came into the vineyard in the morning, some at noon, others later; none received the penny but they that stayed till night. Indeed, this grace perfects all graces. We believe in vain if our faith hold not out to the end. We love in vain if our charity grow cold at last. We pray in vain if our zeal grows faint. We strive in vain at the strait gate if not till we enter. Man is naturally like a horse that loveth short journeys; and there are few that hold out. Whence it comes that the last are often first, and the first last. But he that at every step looks at every stop, and numbers his perils with his paces, either turns aside faintly, or turns back cowardly. Thou walkest every day little or much. Continue this walk forward thy way, and a few days shall bring thee to Olympus. Every day every man takes some pains; let him bestow that measure of pains in

travelling to heaven; and the further he goes the more heart he gets, till at last he "enter through the gates into the city." II. THE MANNER. "Through the gates." Not singularly a gate, but gates. For chap. xxi. 12 the city is said to have twelve gates. "On the east three gates," &c. To declare that men shall come from all the corners of the world: "from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." These gates are not literally to be understood, but mystically, for the manner of entrance. The gates are those passages whereby we must enter this city. Heaven is often said to have a gate (Matt. vii. 13; Psa. xxiv. 7; Gen. xxviii. 17). There must be gates to a city. Doing the commandments is the way to have right in the tree of life. Obedience and sanctification is the gate to this city of salutation. The temple had a gate called Beautiful (Acts iii.). But of poor beauty in regard of this gate. Of the gates of the sanctuary spake David in diverse Psalms, with love and joy. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise." These are holy gates; let every one pray with that royal prophet, "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter." In brief, we may distinguish the gates leading to this city into two—Adoption and Sanctification. Both these meet in Christ, who is the only Gate or Door whereby we enter heaven. III. THE CITY. 1. The situation. "It is placed above" (Gal. iv. 26). "Heaven is in *excelsis*" (Psa. lxxxvii. 1). 2. The society. The King that rules there is one Almighty God in three distinct persons. He made this city for Himself (Psa. xvi. 11). And we have three happy privileges of citizens. (1) Freedom from the law. Not from obedience to it, but from the curse of it. (2) The King's protection (Psa. xci. 4, 11). Our dangers are many in some places, and some in all places. We have God's own guard royal to keep us (Heb. i. 14). (3) The defensive protection of the Law. Christ is our Advocate. 3. The glory. Heaven shall make them that enter it like itself—glorious. As the air by the sun's brightness is transformed bright. How great is that blessedness, where shall be no evil present, no good absent! This is a blessed city. (*T. Adams.*) *The way to the city of God*:—What is the deepest thought in every bosom? Money? No. Rising in the world? No. Pleasure? No. Ease and comfort? No. Health? No. Long life? No. It is that they may at last "enter in through the gates into the city."

I. THE CONDITION OF ENTERING THE HEAVENLY CITY. The doing His—Christ's—commandments. Is salvation earned, then, by our works? Thank God, no. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," &c. Yet it is expressly said here that those who "do His commandments have a right," &c. The key to this is found in St. James. A man is justified "by works and not by faith only." Faith is another word for love. It means in Scripture as in common life—trust, confidence—and this trust and confidence are, in religion, the outcome of love. But what will not love do for its loved one? Love is the surrender of the whole man to its object—the will, heart, life. Works are the evidences of it; its necessary results. Works do not save us, but we cannot be saved without them.

II. THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO FULFIL THAT CONDITION. They have a right. 1. By the merit of their works? Nay, verily. Best men most conscious of shortcoming. As the morning star is black when it passes over the disk of the sun, so the holiness of the best of men is only darkness when seen in the splendour of the holiness of God. 2. But as a proof of their sincerity. That shown, the perfect merits of Christ are theirs. The right is that of Christ, transferred to them, as His. "We are made the righteousness of God in Him." III. SOME REFLECTIONS AND CAUTIONS. 1. Twelve gates, facing all sides. Christianity is a religion for all mankind. The gates of heaven face us wherever we may be. 2. I must enter through the gate. No other name but the name of Christ. 3. Those who do so are "blessed." (1) They are blessed. In the formation of a heavenly character. The perfect peace of a heart raised above passing disturbance. (2) They will be blessed in their destiny. "Beloved, now are ye sons," &c. Heaven entering us, before we, it. 4. To enter, we must hold out to the end. (1) Only safe when we have finished our course. The *Eurydice* sank within a few yards of shore. (2) No reward till the work is done. Bunyan has a trap-door close to the gate of heaven. (*J. Cunningham Geikie, D.D.*) *The rightful entrance into the city of God*:—

I. It is almost impossible to read this emphatic description of the passage of the saints through the gates of the New Jerusalem without going back to the same imagery as employed by Christ with regard to Himself (John x. 1, 2). In both places the general idea is the same—that of an open

and free entrance, as opposed to a stealing in unlawfully, unobserved, and unwarranted. In both cases there may be a reference to Christ as the Door, it being through Him that admission is gained into the ministry of God here, and through Him alone entrance is won into the city of God hereafter; the leading impression, however, conveyed by the words is that of an unopposed entrance, like that of citizens possessed of undoubted rights, into the high places of the town. False religions make man the anxious suppliant of a Supreme Being with whom he has no affinity; Christianity represents him as in covenant with and allied to the Hearer of his prayers, the Object of his worship. "Through the gates into the city." There may be and will be the constant sense of duties left undone, of sins committed unworthy of a son of God, of feeble essays after holiness, falling short—ah, how short!—of what might be; but if only the conscience witness to an earnest desire to do God's will, there will still be the high heart of one who, in covenant with God, sees already his own nature on God's throne, and his own passage open, when his work is done, through the opened gates into the very citadel of the eternal city. II. He who would enter heaven must enter in through the door. There is a certain fixed and definite means of access. By this and no other we look for admission. Now, here again we arrive at a special characteristic of Christianity. From the very beginning it manifested itself a thing of order, rule, system. Now there is in this both an argument and a lesson. In the quiet, unperturbed, self-restraining order in which it commenced, the gospel vindicates to itself a Divine origin. Herein it shows itself to be, not the offspring of man's enthusiasm, but of that same Divine mind which, in the silence of eternity, laid the foundations of the round world, and set the waters their bound which they should not pass. The visible universe and the faith of Christ are equal exemplifications of order and law. And there is a lesson also here. If we would be Christians indeed, if we would attain the holiness here and happiness hereafter which are the heritage of Christ's followers, then must we be content to go on patiently, as they went of old, through the round of religious discipline and religious ordinances. (*Bp. Woodford.*)

Without are dogs.—*Dogs* :—There are four kinds of dogs. There is first the cynic. The cynic, whose very name means "dog," snarls out his sneer at the brave man who risks his life for another, and says he only wanted to be praised in the newspapers or get the Humane Society's medal. For he has no belief in generosity, or enthusiasm, or unselfishness, or truth, or honour, and only scoffs at the earnest souls that have. The second dog is the puppy. This is the dog that can neither talk nor think of anybody or anything but himself, who dresses flashily and curls his hair. He is called a puppy because he is blind, and because he pushes himself into places where he has no right to be. The puppy is more dangerous than you would expect, for he can snarl when he has a smaller dog to deal with, and even bite when no one is looking. The third is the jolly dog. The jolly dog is good-natured, with a loud, cheery voice, and offhand, pleasant manner. He is called "good company," but he is somewhat low company. He is seen sometimes coming out of the public-house, and that grows more frequent. Then he loses his respectability and his good-nature together, and the true heart of him, which is hollow and hard, begins to appear. Beware of the jolly dog. The last dog is the sly dog. The jolly dog likes to be called a sly dog, now and then, but he is not the genuine article. He is too easy for that. The sly dog will put himself to any amount of inconvenience, and bide his time with the greatest patience, that he may overreach you and gain his end at the last. He is always plotting. He has his own ends to serve always. Untrustworthy himself, he is always mistrustful of others. He is a cynic without showing it, as heartless and much more clever and cruel. What do people mean when they say of a lad, that he "has gone to the dogs"? They mean that he has become the lawful prey of one or more of these. (*Prof. Shuttleworth.*)

Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.—*Truthfulness* :—"There is no vice," writes Lord Bacon in his celebrated essay, "Of Truth," "that doth so cover a man with shame, as to be found false, and perfidious. And therefore Mountaign saith prettily, when he inquired the reason, why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace and such an odious charge? Saith he, If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth, is as much as to say, that he is brave towards God, and a coward towards men. For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man." Lying is thus a kind of atheistical bravery; the practical acting up to the disbelief that God either hears, or will punish, the falsities of men on the earth. But there are other causes of lying besides spiritual cowardice and practical disbelief in God. There is, as Lord Bacon also says, "the natural love of lies." These abandoned liars, who make lies because

they love them, are the basest and most corrupt of their species. But there are many other species of liars, base enough indeed, yet not so base and lost as these. The liar who makes a lie because he loves it will lie without the incentive of temptation, whereas temptation is necessary to induce less corrupt persons to lie. Such temptations come, I imagine, at one time or another, in the course of every human life. Probably every human life when it reaches the stage of moral consciousness is, sooner or later, tempted to be false; false either in word or action. 1. Dread is a very common cause of untruthfulness. When children, *e.g.*, tell a lie, either surprise or fear is frequently the cause. Parents are often responsible for the falsehoods of their children. Terror and subjugation are essentially hostile to truth. Slaves are nearly always liars; and children nursed in terror are like slaves in this respect—their minds grow shrewd, but they grow shifty also; and shiftiness is destructive of veracity. Terror of wrong-doing is healthy; but personal terror is poisonous. The dread, however, which is prolific of falsehood is not always a personal dread; it is equally often a dread of consequences. A lie rarely stands alone, singly, by itself. The first lie engenders fear, and as a result of fear, other lies are told; and as the process is repeated, the conscience grows accustomed to a deadening familiarity with falsehood; the power to resist temptation is enfeebled; dread is added to dread; and under the accumulations of dread the sense of truth at length entirely disappears. Dread, too, sometimes arises not from the commission of our own past transgressions, but from the danger of compromising others, or of incurring serious loss. You are (let us say) suddenly asked some question about another. If you answer truthfully it will be to the damage of the other. If you do not answer at all you know that suspicion (suspicion worse, perhaps, than the actual truth) will be inflamed in the mind of the inquirer. What are you to do? The case is a hard one. You have to make choice between evils. In this way, I believe, inquisitiveness is indirectly responsible for, and guilty of, a great deal of lying. The case is otherwise when the dread is, not of injuring others, but of incurring loss oneself. Falsehood in protecting others is at least generous falsehood; but falsehood in protecting ourselves is cowardly. Whatever, therefore, be the inconvenience, or even the loss, arising from the habit of severe and precise truthfulness; yet out of regard for the god-like inviolability of truth, and through a righteous shrinking from the very appearance of falsehood, we ought to guard against any deviation, however slight, from the strictness of truth ourselves; and much more against imposing upon others any such deviations in our behalf. 2. We now pass to a second common cause of untruthfulness, *viz.*, the vanity or the desire to appear well in the eyes of others. This desire often springs from a very pure and noble source. For that man is either callous or degraded who is indifferent to the opinions of his fellow-men. The desire to stand well in the sight of others is one of the strongest and highest incentives to do well ourselves; and on the other hand, the dread of the loss of the esteem of our fellow-men is a noble dread, which often keeps us from doing wrong; and when we have done wrong the penalty of the loss of human esteem is one among the keenest penalties which sensitive souls are called upon to endure. When, therefore, we speak of the desire to appear well in the eyes of others as a common cause of untruthfulness, we speak of the corruption of a desire which, in its original essence, is noble and inspiring. Yet how general and widespread this corruption is! So widespread and general, indeed, that it is very rare to hear any one give an account of a transaction in which themselves have been engaged with perfect fidelity to truth. If the transaction is unworthy, or has not succeeded, they minish, or pass lightly over, their own share in it. If the transaction has been successful, or merits praise, immediately their own share in it grows eminently conspicuous. 3. There remains a third common cause of untruthfulness, *viz.*, the desire for advantage or gain. Of this sordid class are all trading and commercial untruths; all concealing of defects, all misrepresentations and misleading, all false measures and false weights, all unjust prices and balances. Of this sordid class also are all political untruths; untruths told to injure a political antagonist or to advance a political cause. It is sometimes contended that tricks are necessary in trade; and that politics have no indissoluble connection with morals. Such a contention is the abnegation of all Christian ideals; of all practical belief in a God of superintending righteousness and truth. And every untruth, whether in word or act, is a nail in the coffin of life, eternal life. Let us now pass to the consideration of the remarkable circumstance that persons greatly differ in regard to truthfulness; some being very strong and others very weak in this respect. This difference appears to be mainly attributable to two

principal causes: (1) the moral nature of the person, (2) the moral character of the person's environment. In the interests of veracity, nothing can be more important than to make hard the way of the liar, and to make easy the way of the truth-teller. If you, *e.g.*, have children, pass lightly over misfortunes and accidents, such as the breaking of cups and the tearing of clothes; but spare not the rod when a lie has been told; only make the punishment easier in proportion to the readiness with which the lie is confessed. For next to truthfulness, in the order of virtue, comes the confession of untruthfulness. The brave confession of a fault is the best of all safeguards against the repetition of the fault. (*Canon Diggle.*)

Vers. 16-21. **I, Jesus, have sent Mine angel.**—*Our Lord's angel*:—Would our Lord say this of any angel of the Lord, because "all things that the Father hath are His"? Or has our Lord, as man, an angel of His own in the same way that His saints have? St. Luke xxii. 43 seems as if He needed and had, in the days of His flesh, such angelic guardianship as is implied in St. Matt. xviii. 10; and this passage is at least consistent with the view that His angel appears in His form, as St. Peter's was supposed to do (Acts xii. 15). It is very ably argued by St. Augustine (*de Cura pro Mortuis*) that if any apparitions after death or at the moment of death are really objective and supernatural they must be ascribed to angels, not to the spirits of the dead. But we must remember that our Lord's state is not the same as that of His departed servants. He is already in the body of the resurrection, and so conceivably visible. And there can be no doubt that He appeared in His own risen body to St. Paul, and probably to St. Stephen. It may be, therefore, that He now appears personally to St. John, at once superseding and authenticating the previous ministry of the angel. (*W. H. Simcox, M.A.*)

I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.—*The Root and Offspring of David*:—I. THIS TITLE IMPLIES THE ENTIRE IDENTIFICATION OF CHRIST WITH HUMANITY. The certainty of final triumph for humanity rests on the fact of its vital union with Christ. II. THE TITLE CONNECTS HIM WITH THE STREAM OF HUMAN HISTORY. A mysterious consciousness belonged to many of the members of His house and line. Some of them were prophets, and from them sounded out on the youth of the world sayings pregnant with distant meaning. They themselves were types, signs, representatives of Christ, until He Himself should appear. III. THE TITLE ESTABLISHES A UNITY IN THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH NATION. Since, in the Divine counsels, it had been determined that the Redeemer should arise out of the bosom of humanity, some line must be necessarily selected as that of His descent. The line is that of the royal David, and this is the clue by which to traverse the maze of the world's history until the incarnation. IV. THE TITLE EMBODIES A REFERENCE TO THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST. The favourite representation of the prophets is that of the King, whose reign shall be in peace, in truth, in equity, in righteousness for ever and ever (Psa. lxxii; Isa. ii. 4, xlii. 1-4, lii. 13-15, lx; Dan. ii. 44, vii. 13, 14; Micah v. 1-4). V. THE TITLE ALLUDES TO THE VIGOROUS GROWTH AND SURPASSING GREATNESS OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. The word "root" evidently refers to the prophecy in Isa. i. 1-10 (see also Isa. iv. 2; Jer. xxiii. 5; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12). Not the actual root of the tree is meant, but the scion or sucker, which sprouts from the decaying root. At the advent of the Saviour the kingdom of David was indeed like the fallen trunk of a noble tree. A foreign people treads on Judea's soil, and bows a once powerful nation beneath its yoke. Yet behold the vigorous sprout which comes forth out of this decayed root! (*E. Johnson, B.A.*)

The bright and morning star.—*The bright and morning star*:—Stars shine in the darkness. When there is no other light their brightness and beauty cheer us. The stars have always been recognised to be among the loveliest of nature's beauties. When men have sought for the fairest ornaments to adorn the brows of queens and stately ladies, they have tried to make for them stars of gold or gleaming diamonds. And by their steady laws, their regulated movements, the stars act as our guides. Have you ever thought, moreover, how wonderful is the revelation given to us by the stars? If the cloud had never cleared, if men had never seen those lights shining in the far-away distance, how narrow would our ideas have remained! So as we watch the morning star in the pale eastern sky there comes over us a sense of gladness in its beauty, of wonder and awe at the magnificent stellar system to which it belongs, and at the same time a sense of joyful hope in its prophecy that the darkness is passing and the day about to dawn. And "I am," says the Saviour of the world—"I am the Bright and Morning Star." I. We might think of the precious knowledge diffused by Christ's

gospel through the world; we might think of the ideal of life presented by the life of Christ—the ideal of a life meek and lowly, loving and tender, gentle and self-sacrificing, and yet brave with unflinching courage, generous with noble self-sacrifice. But as our thoughts at Christmas rather turn to our homes, we may try to see how Christ is there “the Bright and Morning Star.” The Christ-light in the home alone can make it happy. The Christ-light, the Lord Himself honoured, the influence of His wishes felt, the restraining power of His teaching moulding the character; tempers subdued for His sake, self-will controlled, self-conceit kept down with a strong hand, angry and harsh-judging words silenced, mutual bearing and forbearing, kindness, courtesy, consideration for others, proceeding from thought of Christ and wish to do His will; these are the things that make the home bright. Even one person in a household, thoroughly influenced by the love of Christ, and walking in the light of His presence, will bring wonderful brightness to a whole family. They hardly know what makes home so pleasant. What is it? It is the light from “the Bright and Morning Star.” It glistens in the kind eyes and pleasant countenance of a humble follower of Jesus; and sullenness, gloom, and ill-humour flee before it like shadows before the breaking day. But homes are sometimes darkened by causes over which we seem to have less control—by poverty, sickness, anxiety, sorrow. And the greeting of “Happy Christmas” sometimes comes with a bitter sense of unreality to those who know that food is scanty, or the hearth dark and lonely. Still, there is a power that brings cheer to the poor man’s board, and comfort to the mourner’s sorrow. When “the Morning Star” shines in the heart, those words are often thought of, “I was hungry, and ye fed Me; thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me.” And so Christian charity, Christian kindness, Christian sympathy, passes on the light of Christ from home to home. II. And then our second thought of heavenly joy applies here. If there is a sorrow too deep to be reached by human kindness, it is not too deep to be reached by the light of the “Morning Star.” The revelation of the great unseen realities—is not this the true Light for a shadowed home? A Father in heaven who cares and loves, a Saviour acquainted with grief, a kind Providence which will make all work together for good—is not this revelation like the opening of the shutters of a darkened chamber, so that there streams in the light of the Morning Star—the harbinger of day? III. And this brings us to our last thought, the “Morning Star” is a star of heavenly hope. There are many young and happy hearts at Christmastide. But among them all there are few that have not felt the chill of disappointment, the shadow of doubt and uncertainty from the mystery of life, the solemn darkness of self-reproach and an accusing conscience. The soul is getting farther away from God. Ideas have been entertained, habits have been allowed to grow that have made the gap wider and wider between daily life and the aspirations after goodness that were once felt. The soul is in darkness. Yes, say what we will, the soul must be dark if it is without God. Show me a man who does not know God, who does not care for God, who does not trust and honour the infinite Lord, and I can tell you that whatever be his outward circumstances, his spirit is in awful darkness. On Christmas Day, let any such listen to the words of Jesus—“I am the Bright and Morning Star.” Let that Day Star from on high arise and shine in your heart. Christ loves you, and came into the world and lived and died for you. Let His glory enlighten your soul. (Bp. Wynne.) *Christ the morning star*:—The Lord speaks here in a manner that is all His own. Nothing is more profoundly characteristic in His words, from first to last, than His witness to Himself. He, the sacred exemplar of all self-denial, yet always and immoveably presents Himself in terms of self-assertion, and such self-assertion as must mean either Deity, however in disguise, or a delusion moral as well as mental, of infinite depth. “I am the Truth; I am the Life; I am the Bread of Life; I am the True Vine; I am the Good Shepherd.” We have but this same tone, perfectly retained, when, here the same Voice speaks from amidst the realities of the unseen. The imagery, indeed, is lifted to the scenery of the firmament; He who is the genial Vine and the laborious Shepherd, now also reveals Himself as the Star of Stars in a spiritual sky. “I am the Star.” For the moment we will take the text in this briefest form, for it will suggest to us, in part at least, the reason of the use of the starry metaphor at all. “I am the Star”; why the Star? We may be perfectly sure that the word, with all its radiant beauty, is no mere flight of fancy. Prophecy, not poetry, underlies these last oracles of the Bible. Balaam had heard, among “the words of God,” of a mysterious Person, or at least of a mysterious Power, strong to destroy and save;

figured to his soul in vision as a star, destined in other days to appear out of Israel; and the belief of the Jewish Church, in the lifetime of Jesus, certainly was that the Star of that prediction was the King Messiah. The word indicated, probably, the royal dignity, touched and glorified with the light of Deity, or of Divinity at least. As such the Lord here takes it up. He claims here to be the spiritual and immortal King, the Conqueror, beating down His adversaries and possessing His redeemed. This is what appears in special fulness, in other forms, in earlier passages of the Apocalypse; "the Lamb" is "in the midst of the throne"; the throne is "the throne of God and of the Lamb." But now look further into the text. The voice at Patmos not only claims the primeval prophecy for Jesus, as the King of the new Israel. It expands that prophecy, and discloses truth within truth treasured there. For the Lord does not only assert Himself to be the star, the bright star; as of course His brightness must be surpassing if He is in any sense at all a star. His own presentation of the metaphor has something in it new and special—"I am the Morning Star." Why was not the word "Star" left alone in the utterance? In pointing to Messiah as the Star, were not the ideas of brilliancy, and elevation, and all that is ethereal, sufficient? No; it was not to be so. Messiah Himself so qualifies the word by this one bright epithet as to show Himself as not the King merely, but the King of Morning; around whom gathered, and should gather for ever, all that is real in tenderest hope and youngest vigour, and most cheerful aspiration, and such beginnings, as shall eternally develop and never contract into fixity and decline. It reminds the disciple that his blessed Lord is no mere name of tender recollection, no dear relic of a perished past, to be drawn sometimes in silence from its casket and clasped with the aching fondness and sprinkled with the hot tears, of hopeless memory. He is not Hesperus that sets, but Phosphorus that rises, springing into the sky through the earliest dawn; the pledge of reviving life, and growing light, and all the energies and all the pleasures of the happy day. And the word speaks of a kind of joy for which the open day would not be so true a simile. It indicates the delights of hope along with those of fruition; a happiness in which one of the deep elements is always the thought of something yet to be revealed; light with more light to follow, joy to develop into further joy, as the dawn passes into the morning and then into the day. 1. First, then, we are reminded here that as "His commandments are not grievous," so the principles He gives to animate His follower to obedience are not melancholy. The life eternal, the annihilation of the second death, is the knowledge of Himself; and to know Him is to live in light indeed. It is to touch a sympathy boundless alike in its tenderness and its power; it is to deal perpetually and everywhere with One who is not poetic legend but the central rock of History; One who has proved Himself in the fields of fact to be a reality for ever, and who is exercising at this hour in human experience a multiplicity of personal influence too vast and too peculiar to be accounted for by any mere memory of departed power. He being such, and such being the knowledge of Him, what in brief are His sacred principles for the soul that seeks Him? Simply these in their essence:—first to trust Him, then, to follow Him. 2. And again, this glorious epithet of the Star of salvation—this morning-word—reminds us that not for a part only but for the whole of the earthly course, early as well as late, and late as well as early, Jesus Christ is the true Light to light every man. Not for the sick-man's room only and the dying bed is His faith good. Let us thank God often that it is good there. But this same religion is not only the last light for dying eyes. It is the star of the morning of even this lower life. There is that in it (or rather in Him who is His own religion), which is of all things fittest to enter with harmonious power into all the confiding joy of childhood, and all the strongest aspirations of youthful thought and will. One condition does the Lord propose to the young soul, as to all others—the condition of submission to Himself. And where that condition is, through grace, in its true sense, accepted, there will there be found to develop within the life an influence essentially of strength and gladness; an assurance of a companionship most tender because Divine; of a sympathy meeting every true need of grief or of happiness; of a wisdom which concerns itself with every detail of every day; of an affection to which the best endearments of earth can but point as to their glorious archetype; and, above all this and with it all, the power of the presence of an invisible but awful purity, and the spoken promise, in connection with that presence, of a final life of endless joy. 3. In a few short years there may, there must, come over you the sense of approaching maturity and fixity as to earthly conditions of life and action. You must find, soon or late, as to this

world, that your rate of movement in vigour and enjoyment is no longer, in itself, what once it was. But if Christ dwells in your heart by faith, there will be a charm there which will not only console you under the change, but will glorify it to you. As eternity approaches, you will more distinctly see the connection between it and time. The appointed task, even under the burthen of the slow failure of outward power, will be met by you as those only can meet it who know that these things are links in the indissoluble will of an eternal Friend, and that the veil is already parting which shuts out for a season the open view of the perfection and acceptability of all that will. 4. May we not, in conclusion, move a step further in our meditation, and find here a promise which is concerned also with the immortal world itself? We remember, of course, that He who is here called the Star is elsewhere called the Sun; and we might think, therefore, that He here speaks as, in a certain sense, His own forerunner; the Firstborn of the dead, whose own resurrection is the herald of His own final triumph. But it seems truer to the analogy of His other metaphoric titles to view this title as belonging to no passing phrase of His majesty, if such could be, but to its essence for ever. What elsewhere he claims to be, He is in perpetuity. On the throne as truly as on the Cross, He is the Lamb. In the fields of heaven He is still the Shepherd, "leading His flock to the living fountains of waters." And surely in the upper sky He will be for ever the Star of Morning, so far as He will be the eternal pledge and joy of a life that will be for ever young, of energies that will accumulate without end, of a service before the throne that will always deepen in its ardour and its triumph, of discoveries in the knowledge of the Eternal which will carry the experience of the blessed from glory to glory in a succession that cannot close. (*H. C. G. Moule, M.A.*) *The bright and morning star*:—I. BECAUSE, BY HIS COMING IN THE FLESH, HE INTRODUCES INTO OUR WORLD THE LIGHT OF GOSPEL DAY. What was the state of the world when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men? In the emphatic language of holy writ, "darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people." Survey the state of the heathen at this eventful crisis of the world's history. How dark and how confused were the notions of Deity entertained by the shrewdest of their philosophers! Their religious rites were full of lust and cruelty, and were so far from having a tendency to promote virtue, that they excited them to every species of crime and wickedness. Truly they sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. And what was the state of the Jews at this eventful period? Theirs, doubtless, was a less deplorable condition. They had the oracles of God, and some faint glimmerings of light, by means of figures, and prophecies, and sacrifices; still theirs was a dispensation of types and of shadows. And at the time when God was manifested in the flesh, the Scribes and the Pharisees had spread a mist over the Mosaic observances; the elders, by their vain traditions had rendered its shadows tenfold more obscure, and the whole Jewish system was enveloped in gloom and darkness. But the fulness of time arrived when the bright and morning star appeared above the earth's horizon, scattering the shadows of the Jewish Economy, and pouring a flood of light upon the darkness of Pagan delusions. This light of the world came, and gave to mankind a clear and a full revelation of the nature and perfections of the Deity, made known the way of reconciliation with an offended God, taught man his duty, and unfolded to him the bliss and the glory of heaven. II. BECAUSE, BY HIS RISING IN THE HEART, HE INTRODUCES THE DAY OF SALVATION INTO THE SOUL OF THE SINNER. The soul of man, in its native and unrenewed state, is full of disorder and darkness. He cannot see himself, or God, or Christ, or the way to heaven, in their true light. He may, indeed, give his assent to statements which he hears made upon these subjects, but he cannot have an experimental or abiding sense, even of the most obvious spiritual truths, till his mind is enlightened by the grace of God's Son; till then, even the light that is in him, is darkness. But when the morning star arises in the heart of a sinful being, it produces a change at once great and glorious. Before its rays, the darkness of the mind is dispelled, the understanding is illumined, and the whole soul is renewed in knowledge, as well as in righteousness and true holiness. How vast, for instance, was the change from darkness to light in the case of Saul and Tarsus. III. BECAUSE, BY HIS RISING AT THE TIME APPOINTED IN PROPHECY, HE WILL INTRODUCE INTO OUR WORLD THE GLORY OF MILLENNIAL DAY. IV. BECAUSE, BY HIS RISING AT THE END OF TIME, HE WILL USHER IN THE BLISS AND THE LIGHT OF ETERNAL DAY. (*John McGregor.*) *The bright and morning star*:—I. THE TITLE DECLARES THE BRILLIANCE OF HIS LUSTRE. Amongst the Orientals, the morning star is the favourite emblem of a

great ruler, a martial leader, or a wise teacher. Christ claims this epithet on the ground of possessing the truest glory; that of being the Witness for the Truth, of being the truth itself, and thus of bringing minds under His sway. Compare this title which Christ gives of Himself in the vision of St. John, with that He gives of Himself in the gospel: "I am the Light of the World." In that Light alone can the solution of the great world problems be found. His lustre cannot now be withdrawn, nor can men refuse to open their eyes to its presence. He is the Morning Star of all humanity, the brightest light that has ever dawned upon the world—that guides it onwards to the eternal day. II. IT IMPLIES THE POWER OF HIS ATTRACTION. Man can be moved and drawn only by man. Hence the wisdom of "God manifest in the flesh." III. IT IMPLIES THE FIXITY OF HIS OFFICE. Amidst the progress and the changes of human thought, the revolutions of opinion, the advances or the retrogressions of moral and spiritual life, He abides a steady, ever-shining light. All others are flickering torches, throwing a momentary and misleading glare, then waning and dying out. IV. IT IS EMBLEMATIC OF THE HOPE OF HUMANITY. The morning star is the herald of the dawn. So our hope of a morning for humanity is in Christ. Our only hope is in Him. He is one with us; He has come to His own, and knows its wants, its weakness, its sorrow, and its sin. He shines down upon us now, with powerful and influential brilliance; and He will be associated with all our future struggles as He has been with all our past. Therefore, as Christians, we are confident and hopeful. (*E. Johnson, B.A.*) *The bright and morning star*:—I. THE PROMISE OF MESSIAH WAS THE MORNING STAR TO THE ANCIENT BELIEVER. When first introduced to the faith of the sinning pair in the garden of Eden, it became their "Morning Star"; all besides was dark! They had lost the favour of God. II. THE ADVENT OF JESUS WAS THE MORNING STAR OF A MORE PERFECT ECONOMY. III. CHRIST PREACHED, IS THE MORNING STAR OF ANY PEOPLE TO WHOM HE IS PROCLAIMED. IV. CHRIST IS THE MORNING STAR TO ALL WHO BELIEVE ON HIM. (*H. Wilkes, D.D.*) *Christ the morning star*:—The morning star is one of the most beautiful objects in the sky. "Last in the train of night," it yet sheds the brightest radiance. Too faint by far to penetrate the recesses of ocean, or the deep places of the forest, it slumbers on the surface of the wave, it trembles through the cottage window, or "tips with silver every mountain's head." It rivals not the strong sunlight, nor doth it vie with even that holier day which the moon casts abroad; nevertheless, in the heaven, doth it form a beauteous beacon; nor is the eye satisfied with gazing, when the fierce monarch of the skies arises and chases it away. 1. Apt and beautiful emblem this, of the gentle but glorious light, which Jesus has darted upon the souls of His people! Previous to the coming of Christ, the character of God was, in a great measure, unknown. The adversary had trampled on the shrine of the Lord of Hosts; it was as if that name had ceased to be manifested; it was as if the fire by which he was wont to maintain it, had been quenched. But the Morning Star at length arose: and an uncreated glory, streaming from the revealed attitude of a God at once just and the justifier of the ungodly, flowed with it. But had nothing more than the true character of God been included in this revelation, it had been made in vain. What cares man for the character of God? Were he, indeed, a being much better than he is, we could conceive him, in this case, entertaining such a care; starting up perhaps suddenly, and shivering with fear, at the bare idea of his God being charged with cruelty or injustice. But man as he is, sensual, selfish, unthinking, diseased, deluded, or despairing, entertains not one anxiety about the character of his Maker. But for his own destiny he must care; and he will ask eagerly, "What sort of light has the Morning Star brought, concerning this? What am I told about my future state?" Open the volume and see; start not at the apparent darkness; gaze steadily, and you will be richly rewarded. There are, indeed, no minute views of the future state. The Bible communicates only a few great facts, and leading features of the eternal world. But Christ has cast a light also upon the duty of man. This Moses had, in a great measure, done; but he had not taught man to answer the question fully, "What shall I do to be saved?" Christ came at once to prompt the question, and to provide the reply. Here is no list of austerities; no staggering invitation to swallow down absurdities, to believe what is impossible or revolting; no requirement of an ideal perfection from a child of clay; all is plain and easy, yet leadeth to heaven. Oh, then, will ye not bless the Morning Star, which has risen to guide you along this path to glory? and will you not walk on in its tender light, trusting that it will shine on more and more unto the perfect day? 2. Christ

further resembles the morning star, as He is a giver of joy. The sun-rising is, in truth, a summons to rejoice; and it is obeyed and echoed in a thousand voices of gladness. The moon-beam also communicates its own pensive pleasures, and quieter harmonies to those who can baptize their spirits in its beauty. Nor is the morning star destitute of joy-giving influence. How does it cheer the labourer as he goes forth to his toil, amid the dews of the dawn! How does it soothe the soul of the mariner who gazes at it, till quiet tears bedim his eyelids! How is it the "sun of the sleepless," especially of those who are awake through sorrow! Count up the raptures of earth, and you will find the rarest of them coming from Christ. Consult your own bosoms, and you will find your purest pleasure coming from Him. Sum up the ecstasies of the departed saints, and you will find all of them coming from Him. 3. Again, Christ resembles the morning star, as He is the precursor of a brighter revelation. The morning star is a pledge in the sky that the day is dawning, and at length it "melts away into the light of heaven." So the light we have is comparatively dim; but there is a day behind it. 4. This Morning Star is a precursor of the day of Millennial brightness. There is no change in the outward aspect of the world; the same alternation of hill and valley, of waste and woodland, is presented to the view. But the shadow of sin has passed away. Man has become a nobler being; he is holier and happier. His land is not heaven; but it is no longer accursed in the anger of God. It is a land redeemed, though not glorified. On all its landscapes is written, "Holiness to the Lord." (*G. Gilfillan.*)

The stellar beauty of Christ.—The meaning of my text is this: as the morning star precedes and promises the coming of the day, so Christ heralds the natural and spiritual dawn. 1. Christ heralded the coming of the creation. Oh, it is an interesting thought to me to know that Christ had something to do with the creation! I see now why it was so easy for Him to change our water into wine; He first created the water. I see now why it was so easy for Him to cure the maniac; He first created the intellect. I see now why it was so easy for Him to hush the tempest; He sank Genessaret. I see now why it was so easy for Him to give sight to the blind man; He created the optic nerve. I see now why it was so easy for Him to raise Lazarus from the dead; He created the body of Lazarus, and the rock that shut him in. Hail! Lord Jesus, Morning Star of the first creation. 2. Christ heralds the dawn of comfort in a Christian soul. You are building up some great enterprise. You have built the foundation—the wall—you are just about to put on the capstone, when everything is demolished. Instead of the quick feet in the hall, the heavy tread of those who march to the grave. Oh! what are people to do amid all these sorrows? Some know not which way to turn. But not so the Christian man. He looks up toward the heavens. He sees a bright appearance in the heavens. Can it be only a flashing meteor? Can it be only a falling star? Nay, nay. The longer he looks the more distinct it becomes, until, after a while, he cries out: "A star! a morning star! a star of comfort! a star of grace! a star of peace! The star of the Redeemer!" "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Peace, troubled soul! I put the balm on your wounded heart to-night. The morning star, the morning star of the Redeemer. 3. Christ heralds the dawn of Millennial glory. It is night in China, night in India, night in Siberia, night for the vast majority of the world's population. But it seems to me there are some intimations of the morning. The Hottentot will come out of his mud hovel to look at the dawn; the Chinaman will come up on the granite cliffs, the Norwegian will get up on the rocks, and all the beach of heaven will be crowded with celestial inhabitants come out to see the sun rise over the ocean of the world's agony. They shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. 4. Christ heralds the dawn of heaven upon every Christian's dying pillow. All other lights will fail—the light that falls from the scroll of fame, the light that flashes from the gem in the beautiful apparel, the light that flames from the burning lamps of a banquet—but this light burns on and burns on. No other star ever pointed a mariner into so safe a harbour. No other star ever sunk its silvered anchor so deep into the waters. No other star ever pierced such accumulated cloud, or beckoned with such a holy lustre. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

The morning star.—Throughout the Bible the star is made a symbol of dominion, glory, and triumph. 1. What figure more exquisite, more apt in illustrating the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to His kingdom and to the destinies of humanity! The star appears small up yonder, and yet it is a very vast planet; so Christ appears small to the bystanders at His coming—a mere humble man like ourselves. How little did they know what was

in Him! The star is small, but how wide-spreading is its light! And so, in reference to the breadth of Christ's kingdom and its extent, is the figure exquisite and applicable. 2. In a time of gloom the star appeared. The Roman Empire was apparently in its pride and strength; but, as we all know now, it was bloom outside and worm within. All the hopes of the Jews, one after another, had disappeared. The desires for the coming of a Deliverer, which had been cherished and expressed here and there and yonder—not merely in Judea, but in all other countries, by the foremost minds, whether inspired or uninspired—had failed, and it was an era of desolateness, vice, and darkness, of intellectual pride, along with intellectual weakness when Christ came upon earth. It was what the Apostle calls the fulness of time. It is fitting that this manifestation of Christ at such a time should be called the dawning of the day-star. 3. The birds of night cannot stand before the coming dawn when Venus shines in her lustre in the sky. When Christ appeared upon the earth, the very first scintillation of the day-star was to warn all the old systems of wrong and outrage, oppression and darkness, that their time had come. (*Christian Age.*) *The bright and morning star* :—All the stars are very beautiful to look at. But if we get up before daylight, in the morning, and look out towards the east, where “the bright and morning star” is shining, we shall see that this is more beautiful than the others. How clearly it stands out in the dark sky! With what soft and silvery light it shines! And, as we stand gazing at it, we cannot help thinking how well it may remind us of Jesus. I. GUIDANCE. Our sailors understand this better than any other people. And there is nothing that we need so much as guidance. We know not how to steer our vessel so as to be able to reach that blessed harbour. And one reason why Jesus is called “the bright and morning star” is because He shows us the way to heaven, and guides us in that way. There are rocks and shoals in the sailor's way, and he needs guidance to enable him to steer clear of them, and keep from being wrecked. And, in trying to make our way to heaven, the sins and temptations around us are the rocks and shoals we meet with; and if we look to Jesus, as our star, He will guide us, so that we can steer clear of these dangers. It is mainly through the Bible that Jesus, our bright and Morning Star, gives us the guidance that we need. If we read it carefully and follow its teachings, it will help us to escape a great many dangers, and keep us safe from a great many troubles. II. HOPE. The morning star is very beautiful to look at. It does not give a great deal of light. You cannot see to read by that star. But, as you look at it, it tells you that the night is almost gone. You know that the sun will soon rise and shine, and then there will be light enough for everything. You will be able to see the fields and the woods, and the beautiful flowers, and all the glorious things that God has made. That morning star gives us the hope that the darkness will soon be gone, and the light of day be shining all about us. And Jesus may well be compared to such a star, because when He rises and shines on our hearts He fills them with the sweet hope that the darkness of this world will soon pass away, and the bright, clear light of heaven will be shining around us. And this hope is a bright and beautiful thing. It is able to make us happy, when nothing else in the world can do so. III. JOY. One of our great poets has said: “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.” The meaning of this is, that it always makes people glad, or gives them joy, to see a beautiful thing. And this is true. Now a star is a beautiful thing. And “the bright and morning star” is very beautiful. Whenever I think of this star I am reminded of my first visit to Switzerland a good many years ago. We went up from Geneva to the valley of Chamouni, to see Mont Blanc. It was Saturday evening when we arrived there. I wanted very much to see how that great mountain would look when the sun was rising on it. So, on the next morning, I got up between three and four o'clock to be in good time to see the sun rise. I dressed myself, and, all alone, walked quietly down the valley, that I might be ready to catch the first sight of the beams of the sun, as they began to shine upon the snowy summit of the mountain, and gild it with golden beauty. It was a beautifully clear night, or rather morning, though it was still quite dark. There was no mist around the mountain, and not a cloud in the sky. The summit of Mont Blanc is a great, rounded dome of snow. This was lifted far up into the clear, dark sky. And right over the top of the mountain I saw the morning star. How calm it seemed there! How soft and silvery was the light it shed! How brightly and beautifully it was shining down on the snowy summit of that great mountain. It was one of the most lovely sights I ever saw. I thought it was worth while to go all the way to Switzerland, if there

had been nothing else to see there but just that beautiful sight of the morning star above the summit of Mont Blanc. As I walked slowly down the valley, looking at that beautiful star, I thought of these sweet words of Jesus: "I am the bright and morning star." The sight of that star made me glad. It gave me joy then, while I was looking at it. And it gives me joy now, whenever I think about it. But all the stars in the world put together are not half so beautiful as Jesus is. And when we see Him, and know Him, as our "bright and Morning Star," there is no joy to be found in anything so great as that which He gives. (R. Newton, D.D.)

Ver. 17. *The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.—Christ's coming to the world, and men's coming to Christ:—*The two halves of the verse do not refer to the same persons, or the same "coming." The first portion is an invocation or a prayer; the second portion is an invitation or an offer. The one is addressed to Christ, the other to men. The commentary upon the former is the last words of the Book, where we find the seer answering the promise of his Master—"Behold! I come quickly!" with the sigh of longing: "Even so! Come! Lord Jesus." And in precisely a similar fashion the bride here, longing for the presence of the bridegroom, answers His promise—"Behold I come quickly," which occurs a verse or two before—with the petition which all who hear it are bidden to swell till it rolls in a great wave of supplication to His feet. And then with that coming, another "coming" is connected. The one is the coming of Christ to the world at last; the other is the coming of men to Christ now. The double office of the Church is represented here, the voice that rose in petition to heaven has to sound upon earth in proclamation. And the double relation of Christ to His Church is implied here. He is absent, therefore He is prayed to come; but He is in such a fashion present as that any who will can come to Him.

I. THE INVOCATION, OR THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE WORLD. Christ has come, Christ will come. These are the two great facts from which, as from two golden hooks, the whole chain of human history hangs in a mighty curve. Memory should feed upon the one, hope should leap up to grasp the other. Christ "comes," though He is always present in human history, comes to our apprehensions in eras of rapid change, in revolutionary times when some ancient iniquity is smitten down, and some new fair form emerges from the chaos. The electricity is long in gathering during the fervid summer heat, in the slow-moving and changing clouds, but when it is gathered there comes the flash. The snow is long in collecting on the precipitous face of the Alp, but when the weight has become sufficient down it rushes, the white death of the avalanche. For fifty-nine (silent) minutes and fifty-nine (silent) seconds the hand moves round the dial, and at the sixtieth it strikes. So, at long intervals in the history of nations, a crash comes, and men say: "Behold the Lord! He cometh to judge the world." Surely, surely it needs no words to enforce the thought that all who love Him, and all who love truth and righteousness, which are His, and all who desire that the world's sorrows should be alleviated and the world's evils should be chastised and smitten, must lift up the old, old cry: "Even so! Come! Lord Jesus." II. THE INVITATION, OR THE COMING OF MEN TO CHRIST. What is it to come? Listen to His own explanation: "He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger," &c. Then "coming," and "taking," and "drinking," are all but various forms of representing the one act of believing in Him. We come to Him when we trust Him. To come to Christ is faith. Who is it that are asked to come? "He that thirsteth" and "he that willeth." The one phrase expresses the universal condition, the other only the limitation necessary in the very nature of things. "He that thirsteth." Who does not? Your heart is parched for love; your mind, whether you know it or not, is restless and athirst for truth that you can cleave to in all circumstances. Your will longs for a loving authority that shall subdue and tame it. Your conscience is calling out for cleansing, for pacifying, for purity. Your whole being is one great want and emptiness. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," it is only He that can slake the thirst, that can satisfy the hunger. "Whosoever will." A wish is enough, but a wish is indispensable. How strange, and yet how common it is, that the thirsty man is not the willing man. Further, what is offered? "The water of life." What is that? Not a thing, but a person—Christ Himself; even as He said: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." And what are the conditions? "Let Him take the water of life for nothing;" as the word might have been rendered, "For nothing." He says to us, "I will not sell it to you, I will give it to you." And too many of us say to Him, "We had rather buy it, or at any rate pay

something towards it." No effort, no righteousness, no sacrifice, no anything is wanted. "Without money and without price." You have only got to give up yourselves. III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO COMINGS. There is a twofold connection that I would point out to you. Christ does not yet come in order that men may come to Him. He delays His drawing near, in His longsuffering mercy, in order that over all the earth the glad news may flash, and to every spirit the invitation may come. Christ tarries that you may hear, and repent, and come to Him. That is the first phase of the connection between these two things. The other is—because Christ will come to the world, therefore let us come to Him now. Joyful as the spring after the winter, and as the sunshine after the darkness, as that coming of His ought to be to all; and though it be the object or desire to all hearts that love Him and the healing for the miseries and sorrows of the world, do not forget it has a very solemn and a very terrible side. He comes, when He does come, to judge. He comes, not as of old, in lowliness, to heal and to succour and to save, but He comes to heal and to succour and to save all them that love His appearing, and them only, and He comes to judge all men whether they love His appearing or no. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) The two "comes":—I. Our text begins with THE HEAVENWARD CRY OF PRAYER. Surely the sense requires us to regard this cry of "come" as addressed to our Lord Jesus, who in a previous verse had been saying, "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me." 1. The matter of this cry—it is the coming of Christ. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." This is and always has been the universal cry of the Church of Jesus Christ. 2. Next observe the persons crying. The Spirit is first mentioned—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." And why does the Holy Ghost desire the coming of the Lord Jesus? At present the Spirit is, so to speak, the vicegerent of this dispensation upon earth. How much He is provoked all the world over it is not possible for us to know! The ungodly vex Him, they reject His testimony, and resist His operations. And, alas, the saints grieve Him too; and so He desireth the end of this evil estate, and saith to our Lord Jesus, "Come." Beside, the Spirit's great desire is to glorify Christ. Now, as the coming of Christ will be the full manifestation of the Redeemer's glory, the Spirit therefore desireth that He may come and take to Himself His great power, and reign. Our text next tells us that, "the bride saith, Come." Now, a bride is one whose marriage is near, either as having just happened or as close at hand. So is the Church very nearly arrived at the grand hour, when it shall be said "the marriage of the Lamb is come and His bride hath made herself ready"; and because of that she is full of joy at the prospect of hearing the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." Who marvelleth that it is so? The next clause of the text indicates that each separate believer should breathe the same desire, "Let him that heareth say, Come." This will be the index of your belonging to the bride, the token of your sharing in the one Spirit, if you unite with the Spirit and the bride in saying, "Come." For no ungodly man truly desireth Christ's coming; but on the contrary he desireth to get away from Him, and forget His very existence. To delight in drawing near unto the Lord Jesus Christ; to long to see Him manifested in fulness of glory is the ensign of a true soldier of the Cross. Do you feel this? 3. Now a word upon the tense in which the cry is put. It is in the present tense. The Spirit and the bride are anxious that Christ should come at once, and he that knoweth Christ and loveth Him desireth also that He should not tarry. Is it not time as far as our poor judgments go that Jesus should come? II. THE EARTHWARD CRY OF INVITATION TO MEN. I cannot quite tell you how it is that the sense in my text glides away from the coming of Christ to the earth into the coming of sinners to Christ, but it does. Like colours which blend, or strains of music which melt into each other, so the first sense slides into the second. This almost insensible transition seems to me to have been occasioned by the memory of the fact that the coming of Christ is not desirable to all mankind. He lets the prayer flow towards Himself, but yet directs its flow towards poor sinners also. He Himself seems to say, "Ye bid Me come, but I, as the Saviour of men, look at your brothers and your sisters who are yet in the far country, the other sheep which are not yet of the fold, whom also I must bring in, and in answer to your cry to Me to come I speak to those wandering ones, and say, 'Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'" Is not that the way in which the sense glides from its first direction? Now, from whom does this cry arise? 1. It first comes from Jesus. It is He who says, "Let Him that is athirst come." 2. But next, it is the call of the Spirit of God. The Spirit says, "Come." This Book which He has written, on every page says to men, "Come! Come to Jesus." And

those secret motions of power upon the conscience, those times when the heart grows calm even amid dissipation, and thought is forced upon the mind, those are the movements of the Spirit of God by which He is showing man His danger and revealing to him his refuge, and so is saying, "Come." 3. And this is the speech of the Church too in conjunction with the Spirit, for the Spirit speaks with the bride and the bride speaks by the Spirit. The Church is always saying "Come." 4. The next giver of the invitation is spoken of as "him that heareth." If you have had an ear to hear, and have heard the gospel to your own salvation, the very next thing you have to do is to say to those around you, "Come." Give your Master's invitation, distribute the testimony of His loving will, and bid poor sinners come to Jesus.

III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO COMINGS. 1. There is this relation, first, they are both suggested in this passage by the closing of the scriptural canon. It is because the Book was about to receive its *finis* that the Spirit and the bride unitedly cried to the sinners to come at once. No fresh gospel is to be expected, therefore let them come at once. 2. I think I perceive another connection, namely, that those people who in very truth love Christ enough to cry to Him continually to come are sure to love sinners also, and to say to them also, "Come." 3. There is this connection also, that before Christ comes a certain number of His elect must be ingathered. Oh, then, it is ours to labour that the wanderers may come home, for so we are, as far as lieth in us, hastening the time when our Beloved Himself shall come. 4. Once more, there is a sort of coming of Christ which, though it be not the first meaning here, may be included in it, for it touches the centre of the sinner's coming to Christ. Because when we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus," if He shall answer us by giving us of His Spirit more fully, so that He comes to us spiritually, then penitent souls will assuredly be brought to His feet.

IV. Well, then, lastly, WHAT ARE THE RESPONSES? We sent up a cry to heaven, and said, "Come." The response is, "Behold, I come quickly." That is eminently satisfactory. Christ will descend to earth as surely as He ascended to heaven, and when He cometh there will be victory to the right and to the true, and His saints shall reign with Him. And now concerning this other cry of "Come." We ask sinners to come. We have asked them in a fourfold voice: Jesus, the Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, they have all said, "Come." Will they come? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The double "come":—We have open before us the last page of the Word of God. How shall the book finish? Shall it close with a promise? It is well that it should, and there is the cheering word for the righteous, "Blessed are they that do His commandments," &c. Shall it close with a threatening to the wicked? Here it is: "without are dogs," &c. Shall the last sentence be full of tender invitation and earnest entreaty to the sinner, bidding him come to Christ and live? Yes, let it be so; and yet shall we forget the Lord Himself while we are thinking of the sinner? He has told us that He will come—should not the very last word of Scripture have a reference to Him and to His glorious advent? Should not the Spirit at the last, as well as at the first, bear witness to Jesus? Shall not the last word that shall linger in the reader's ear speak of the approaching glory of the Lord? Yes, let it be so: but it would be best of all if we could have a word that would combine the four: a promise to the righteous, a threatening to the wicked, an invitation to the poor and needy, and a welcome to the coming one. Who could devise such a verse? The Holy Ghost is equal to the emergency. He can dictate such a verse: He has dictated it. Here it is in the words of our text.

I. First, then, let us consider, THE TWOFOLD MINISTRY. 1. There is in the text a cry for the coming of the Lord. Let every one that hears the prophecy of our Lord's assured coming join in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." 2. But there is a second ministry of the Church, which is the cry for the coming of sinners to Christ. In this respect "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The world should ring with "Come to Jesus!" 3. This, then, is the double ministry, and I want you to notice that the first call is not opposed to the second. The fact that Christ is coming ought never to make us any the less diligent in pressing sinners to come to Christ. 4. Again, take heed that the second call never obscures the first. Be taken up with evangelical work; let it fill your heart; but, at the same time, watch for that sudden appearing which, to many, will be as unwelcome as a thief in the night. 5. Let the two "comes" leap at the same moment from your heart, for they are linked together. Christ will not come until He hath gathered unto Himself an elect company; therefore, when you and I go forth and say to sinners, "Come," and God blesses us to the bringing of them in, we are doing the best we can to hasten the advent of the Son of man.

II. THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS SECURED. According to our text, "The Spirit and the

bride say, Come." They always do say it, and always will say it till Jesus comes.

1. The Spirit says it. What a cry must this be which comes up from the Spirit of God Himself! Given at Pentecost, He has never returned or left the Church, but He dwells in chosen hearts, as in a temple, even to this day. He is always moving men to pray that Christ may come, and moving men to come to Christ.

2. This also is certainly fulfilled by the Church wherever she is a true Church.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS INCREASED. "Let him that heareth say, Come." The hearing man is to say, "Come," but the unconverted man is not bidden so to do. No, he cannot say "Come" till he has first come for himself. You that are not saved cannot invite others. How can you? Yet all of you who have really heard the gospel with opened ear, and received the truth of God by faith into your souls, are called upon to cry, "Come." 1. See how this perpetuates the cry. As in the old Greek games the athletes ran with torches, and one handed the light to another, and thus it passed along the line, so is it with us. Each man runneth his race, but he passeth the torch on to another that the light may never go out from generation to generation. Let the fathers teach the children, and the children their children, and so while the sun and the moon endure let the voice that crieth, "Come" to Christ, go up to heaven, and let the voice that crieth, "Come" to sinners, be heard in the chief places of concourse. 2. This precept secures the swelling of the volume of the cry; for if every man that hears the gospel is to cry, "Come," then there will be more voices, and yet more.

(*Ibid.*) *On the invitations of the gospel*.—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS INVITATION? And what is comprehended in coming to Him? Simply obeying His word! Even now the chief of sinners is invited to return to God, with the promise of free forgiveness, and the prospect of everlasting felicity held out to him. II. Such is the invitation before us. Is it, in what it requires us to do, aught else than WHAT OUR OWN CONSCIENCES HAVE OFTEN AND AGAIN URGED US TO DO? Has the still small voice within us never told us that while we are at a distance from God, we never can be happy? But we have also to remember that the calls to return to God, which have been addressed to us through the instrumentality of conscience, were in reality the dictates of that Spirit of all grace and goodness, who is represented in the text as inviting us to a Saviour. Though we cannot explain His operations, nor distinguish them usually from what we call those of our own minds, yet we know that the Spirit of God suggests and excites to all good, that it is He who restrains us from utter reprobation. But we have also to observe, that the invitations of the Spirit are addressed to us in the written word of God; and oh, how frequently are the entreaties, the warnings, and the calls of that word read, without the slightest remembrance that it actually is the Word of God to the reader! Surely it is not a question to be dismissed without concern, whether your Maker has called on you to return to His service and favour, and you are exposed to the fearful penalty of shutting your ears to His call, and despising His reproof. The Bride saith, "Come!" The Church of Christ is meant by this expression. That Church consists not only of those Christians who are now on earth, but of those also who have gone before us, on the path which leads to God, and now live in His presence in heaven. We are not only, through the mercy of the Almighty, called on to consider the things which belong to our peace, through the instrumentality of Christian institutions around us, but we should also remember that they too call upon us, who now enjoy the reward of their toils and have entered on their rest, to follow in their footsteps and emulate their example. The affections of nature add their entreaty to the command of Divine authority; and every holy example of departed saints, in the record of your own memory, or in that of Scripture, as well as all the invitations addressed to you through the instituted means of grace, form but, as it were, the united voice of the Church in heaven and the Church on earth—"Come!" Come to participate in the privileges of those who were the truly honourable of the earth, and to an eternal reunion with the great and good, in unmingled happiness and perfection. One observation on the words, "Let him that heareth say, Come"—him who has already heard and obeyed the call. We are bound, as far as in us lies, to make known the gospel of our hopes to others, and endeavour to induce them to believe and obey; and, may we not add, that this should be felt by Christians as the impulse of affection, not merely as the obligation of duty. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Opportunities, both public and private, are abundant, for this joint exercise of Christian love and Christian obedience. And are there not abundant motives to it? It is to be a fellow-worker with Christ. It is to be an honoured means in God's hand of accomplishing greater

good than lies within the attainment of earthly power or wisdom. III. WHO ARE THEY TO WHOM THE INVITATION IS SO ESPECIALLY ADDRESSED, under the descriptions, "Him that is athirst," and "Whosoever will"? The metaphor employed in our text directs us intelligibly in pointing out the first of the classes referred to. Let him that is athirst take of the water of life freely. That is, him who thirsts for that water! Come to Christ, and take of the water of life freely; intrust yourself unreservedly into His hands, and to His disposal, as your Teacher, your Master, and your Saviour; and while you do this you will experience that the more your knowledge of Him increases, the more your peace and your hope will increase also. It is, in truth, the inquirer's unwillingness to submit himself to Christ in all his offices, which usually stands in the way of his own peace. We believe there are exceptions, but not so numerous as to disprove the general assertion. A sense of sin leads us to distrust the Redeemer, or a love of some sin renders us indisposed to renounce it. To meet these obstacles the gospel is, on the one hand, abundant in its assurances that none ever did or shall trust in God in vain; and, on the other, most peremptory in its demands that all sin shall be renounced in coming unto Christ. "And whosoever will!" Whosoever is sincerely desirous to partake in the benefits of salvation, whether his feelings are characterised or not by the excitement of those just referred to, let him too come! The description is just made more general in these words for the purpose of displaying more forcibly and persuasively the Divine goodwill towards all; nor can we conceive a limitation to the comprehensiveness of this description, which would authorise us in refusing to any the hopes and invitations of the gospel. (*John Park.*) *God's mercy towards a soul-thirsting world:—I. IN THE PROVISION HE HAS MADE FOR IT.* 1. The provision is exquisitely suitable. 2. The provision is absolutely free. II. *IN THE PRESSING INVITATION TO THE PROVISION.* 1. The Divine Spirit says "Come." 2. The Christian Church says "Come." 3. The mere hearer is commanded to say "Come." (*Homilist.*) *Come, oh Saviour! Come, oh sinner!—I. THE CRY FOR CHRIST'S ADVENT.* It is this advent that is the great theme of the Apocalypse, and the central objects of its scenes. It opens with, "Behold, He cometh"; it goes on with, "Behold, I come as a thief"; and it ends with, "Behold, I come quickly." All the predictions throughout the book bear upon this event, and carry forward the Church's hopes to this great goal. But there are three parties here represented as uttering this prayer. 1. The Spirit. He cries, "Come." What so interests the Spirit in the advent? (1) Christ will then be fully glorified, and it is the Spirit's office to glorify Christ. (2) Then the whole earth will be converted, and the Spirit will get full scope to all His longings and yearnings over men. 2. The Bride—the Lamb's wife, the whole Church as a body, as a virgin betrothed, looking for the marriage day. 3. He that heareth. "Blessed is he that heareth." Not as if the hearer was not part of the Bride; but the word thus singles out each one on whose ears the message is falling. The moment you hear it, you should cry, "Come! Come, Lord Jesus!" For then our sins and sorrows are ended; then our victory is won; then this vile body is changed; then we meet and unite forever with the loved and lost; then shall the ransomed of the Lord return, and come to Zion with songs. II. *THE INVITATION TO THE SINNER.* 1. The inviter—Christ Himself; the same who said, "Come unto Me." He invited once on earth: He now invites from heaven with the same urgency and love. 2. The persons invited. Do you want to be happy? Joy is here for you, whoever and whatever you are. 3. The blessings invited to—the water of life. "Water," that which will thoroughly refresh you and quench your thirst; "water of life," living and life-giving; a quickening well; a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Not a shower, nor a stream, but a well—a fountain (*chap. xxi. 6*). 4. The price—Freely! Free to each one as He is; though the chief of sinners, the emptiest, wickedest, thirstiest of the sons of men. 5. The time—the invitation comes forth at the close of that book which sums up all revelation. It contains Christ's last words, meant specially for the last days of a weary, thirsty world; when men, having tried every pleasure, vanity, lust, folly, and found nothing, having exhausted every cup and broken every cistern, will be found more thoroughly weary and thirsty than before. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The bride's twofold cry:—I. THAT WHEN THE CHURCH CRIES MOST EARNESTLY FOR THE MASTER, SHE WILL STRIVE MOST EARNESTLY FOR THE WORLD.* Her prayer to Christ, and her invitation to the perishing, will go forth from the self-same lips, and at the self-same time. Her advent song will have a good gospel refrain. There are times when it can hardly be said that the Church does long for the nearer and fuller manifestation of her Lord—when she has settled down into a

state of apathy and indifference. And it is just at these times that she grows lax in her evangelistic work, and becomes careless about the world which lieth in wickedness. On the other hand, there are times when the Church is stirred to her deepest, inmost heart for a fuller and nearer manifestation of her Master's presence. And it is just at these times that she pleads most earnestly and powerfully with sinners, and that her invitations to the world go forth most freely. Calling earnestly for the Lord, she calls most beseechingly to the world. She finds the banquet so rich and full that she cannot but invite the perishing to partake of it. II. IF THE CHURCH WOULD HEAR THE LORD'S VOICE AND ENJOY THE LORD'S PRESENCE, SHE MUST MAKE HIS VOICE HEARD BY THE UNCONVERTED. "Let him that heareth say, Come." That is—let him that hearkeneth, that hath his ears open for the Master's voice, and wishes to enjoy the Master's presence, let him make known the Master's promises and the Master's invitations to the unbelieving world. Or to put it in one brief, simple sentence. The highest Christian life can only be enjoyed by those who are wrestling with the world, and calling the unbelieving to the Saviour's feet. The higher Christian life is not possible to those who coddle and nurse their own souls, and spend all their strength in hunting for spiritual joy and securing their own salvation. Just in proportion to our anxiety about the salvation of others will complete salvation be attained by ourselves. Christ will speak most graciously to our souls when our mouths are open to declare His word. You have heard of the old mystics, the Christian mystics of the middle ages. They were men who thought that Christ would appear to them in some material form—or at least some visible form—if they watched and waited for Him long and patiently enough. And they shut themselves in their lonely cells, far away from the world, its cares, and sorrows. But the vision came not. The weird creations of their own mad dreams came to mock their endeavours—nothing more. No face of Christ appeared; there was no realisation of the Divine presence. These men were seeking to save their own souls, and only that, and Christ would not answer them. There is something akin to this old mysticism in the present day. Men who have no desire for evangelisation work, no concern for the sinning, dying world, are expecting to receive of Christ all the power and joy of faith. They are sitting down with open ear but closed lips at the Master's feet; they would gain all for themselves and nothing for the world; and Christ withholds the vision now as He did in days of old. You shall not have the fulness of power, He says, unless you will use it in the work of conversion. I will not show you the glory of My face unless you will make known that glory to others. "Let him that heareth say, Come." III. THOSE WHO LONG FOR THE MASTER'S PRESENCE HAVE MOST FAITH IN THE MASTER'S POWER. It is this longing and expectant bride who is praying for the second advent—panting, groaning for her Lord's presence. It is this bride who utters the closing invitations of our text. It is because she has felt His power—felt it throbbing through all her being—that she longs for more of it. It is because she has tasted the water of life, and knows its sweetness, and its gladness, and its healing virtues, that she prays for a fuller draught. Ah, she has great faith in her Master and in the provisions of His love. The first and last and always present sign of an apathetic and listless Church is a loss of faith in the power of the gospel. The Church which has enjoyed little of Christ is still generally audacious and unbelieving enough to think that it has enjoyed all. It thinks it has received all, or nearly all, that He can give, and proved the sum total of His power. But to a Church which rejoices in Christ, which has drunk largely of His Spirit, and is crying day and night for more of it, the gospel is all the power and sweetness of God to every one that it touches. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *The gracious invitation of Christ to sinners*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE THIRSTING HERE SPOKEN OF. 1. Do any make the things of this world the chief object of their thirst? Our Lord tells them how they should regulate their desires, and which way they ought to turn them (*Psa. iv. 6*). 2. If any thirst after righteousness—either the righteousness of justification or sanctification—they must apply to Jesus Christ in order to obtain the necessary mercies (*1 Cor. i. 30*). 3. If any thirst after Jesus Christ and His grace; such are called in the text. This thirst is a fruit of spiritual life: for how can a soul thirst after Jesus unless the soul knows Him, and, in some measure, the need it stands in of an interest in Him; and His suitableness to the wants of the soul? 4. If any thirst after happiness—though this thirsting may be found where there is nothing but common convictions, no desire after holiness, but only a desire to be saved from misery, not from sin—yet Jesus calls such to come to Him for that happiness which they desire. Would you

be happy hereafter? Then you must begin with Christ now; He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (1) Spiritual thirst proceeds from a sense of the soul's wants: either grace and holiness, or the increase of these mercies. (2) Souls spiritually athirst are pained and uneasy in their minds till they obtain the very mercy desired. (3) Spiritual thirst centres in Christ; souls spiritually athirst have their chief inquiries and desires after Him and His benefits as the Water of Life; and Himself as the Fountain of all grace and blessedness. (4) Spiritual thirst after Jesus Christ, His grace, righteousness, and holiness is laborious; it is willing to be at any pains, in God's way, to gain satisfaction, or have its desires answered.

II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST INVITES EVERY THIRSTY SOUL TO COME TO HIM. 1. What this coming is. It is believing in Jesus Christ (John vi. 35). Not an act of the body, but of the soul. The consent of the will. Receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation. We first come to Christ by faith, and then to God by Him. 2. To whom convinced sinners should come for relief. To Jesus Christ. He is very God; add, as Mediator between God and man, He has an all-fulness in Him. 3. Who are the persons that Jesus calls to come to Him. III. HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THE EXPRESSION "WHOSOEVER WILL." IV. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WILL ABUNDANTLY SATISFY EVERY THIRSTY SOUL THAT COMES TO HIM. This is evident—

1. By the frequent repetition of His calls and invitations to sinners to return and come to Him for His benefits. 2. From the many instances of those that came to Jesus Christ, in the days of His ministry upon earth, for some bodily favour, either for themselves or friends or relations. 3. By the experience of every true believer. V. WHAT DO NEEDY SOULS FIND IN JESUS CHRIST UPON THEIR COMING TO HIM? 1. He that has natural thirst is willing to be at any reasonable cost for something to satisfy his thirst: for he knows that if he has not timely relief he is in danger of his life. So the soul that thirsts after Jesus Christ and His grace is willing to part with all for Him; for he knows that Christ has enough in Him to satisfy all his spiritual desires. 2. That which satisfies natural thirst will be highly esteemed (Job xxiii. 12; Jer. xv. 16; Ps. cxix. 97). 3. If the soul is truly athirst after Jesus Christ and His grace, nothing short of Christ will satisfy it. 4. A thirsty man will be glad of, and thankful for, seasonable relief. 5. The thirsty man's desires are not satisfied once for all, but he must have new supplies (John vi. 34; 1 Pet. ii. 3, 4). 6. A thirsty man will be willing to take any pains to obtain his desires. Such will come to the fountain, and sit at the pool, and wait at the posts of wisdom's gates; they will honour the ordinances of Jesus Christ by a careful attendance on them, or rather on God in them, in order to obtain the mercies that their souls want. To such as have experienced this thirsting after Jesus Christ and His benefits, and have been made willing to come to Him, and look for salvation from Him upon His own terms. Be very thankful to God for what He has discovered to you, and wrought in and for you. Give thanks to God for the fulness of Jesus Christ as Mediator, prepared for the supply of needy souls; and then for His showing you, by the gospel, the fulness of grace that is in Christ. Give thanks to God for drawing you. Take care to exert and lay out for the honour and glory of God and for the exaltation of Jesus Christ, for the service of His kingdom and the good of souls whatsoever you have received from Him. Oh let Him have the honour of His grace. (*W. Notcutt.*) *Come and welcome:—* The cry of the Christian religion is the simple word "come." The Jewish law said, "Go, and take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Go, and break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; go, and keep them, and thou shalt live." The law repels; the gospel attracts. I. THERE IS A "WATER OF LIFE." Man is utterly ruined and undone. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The skin bottle of his righteousness is all dried up, and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. Must he perish? He looks aloft, beneath, around, and he discovers no means of escape. Must thirst devour him? No; for the text declares there is a fountain of life. Ordained in old eternity by God in solemn covenant, this fountain, this Divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God's decrees. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the covenant, opened by Christ when He died upon the Cross, floweth this day to give life and health and joy and peace to poor sinners dead in sin and ruined by the fall. There is a "water of life." By this water of life is intended God's free grace, God's love for men, so that if you come and drink, you shall find this to be life indeed to your soul, for in drinking of God's grace you inherit God's love, you are reconciled to God, God stands in a fatherly relation to you, He loves you, and His great infinite heart yearns towards you. Again, it is living

water not simply because it is love, and that is life, but it saves from impending death. Come hither then, ye sin-doomed; this water can wash away your sins, and when your sins are washed away, then shall ye live; for the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. "But," saith the poor convicted soul, "this is not all I want, for if all the sins I have ever committed were blotted out, in one ten minutes I should commit many more. If I were now completely pardoned, it would not be many seconds before I should destroy my soul and sink helplessly again." Ay! but see here, this is living water, it can quench thy thirst of sin; entering into thy soul it shall overcome and cover with its floods thy propensities to evil. This is life indeed, for here is favour, here is pardon, here is sanctity, the renewing of the soul by the washing of water through the Word. "But," saith one, "I have a longing within me which I cannot satisfy. I feel sure that if I be pardoned yet there is something which I want—which nothing I have ever heard of, or have ever seen or handled, can satisfy. I have within me an aching void which the world can never fill." But hearken! thou that art wretched and miserable, here is living water that can quench thy thirst. Come hither and drink, and thou shalt be satisfied; for he that is a believer in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough for ever. You shall never thirst again, except it be that you shall long for deeper draughts of this living fountain. And, moreover, he who drinketh of this living water shall never die. His body shall see corruption for a little while, but his soul, mounting aloft, shall dwell with Jesus. Yea! and his very body, when it has passed through the purifying process, shall rise again more glorious than when it was sown in weakness. It shall rise in glory, in honour, in power, in majesty, and united with the soul, it shall everlastingly inherit the joys which Christ has prepared for them that love Him. II. THE INVITATION IS VERY WIDE—"WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." The one question I have to ask is, art thou willing? if so, Christ bids thee take the water of life. Art thou willing? if so, be pardoned, be sanctified, be made whole. For if thou art willing Christ is willing too, and thou art freely invited to come and welcome to the fountain of life and grace. Now mark, the question has to do with the will. "Oh," says one, "I am so foolish I cannot understand the plan of salvation, therefore I may not come and drink." But my question has nothing to do with your understanding, it has to do with your will. You may be as big a fool as you will, but if you are willing to come to Christ you are freely invited. "Oh," says one, "I can understand the plan of salvation, but I cannot repent as I would. Sir, my heart is so hard I cannot bring the tear to my eye. I cannot feel my sins as I would desire." Ay, but this text has nothing to do with your heart; it is with your will. Are you willing? Then be your heart hard as the nether millstone, if thou art willing to be saved I am bidden to invite thee. "Whosoever will," not "whosoever feels," but "whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Yes," says one, "I can honestly say I am willing, but my heart will not soften. I wish that grace would change me. I can say I wish that Christ would soften my heart. I am willing." Well, then, the text is for thee, "Whosoever will, let him come." If thou art willing thou art freely invited to Christ. "No," saith one, "but I am such a great sinner. I have been a drunkard; I have been a lascivious man; I have gone far astray from the paths of rectitude. I would not have all my sins known to my fellow creatures. How can God accept of such a wretch as I am, such a foul creature as I have been?" Mark thee, man! There is no reference made here to thy past life. It simply says, "whosoever will." Art thou willing? "Ah!" saith one, "God knows I am willing, but still I do not think I am worthy." No, I know you are not, but what is that to do with it? It is not, "whosoever is worthy," but "whosoever will, let him come." "Well," says one, "I believe that whosoever will may come, but not me, for I am the vilest sinner out of hell." But hark thee, sinner, it says, "whosoever." What a big word that is! Whosoever! There is no standard-height here. It is of any height and any size. III. HOW CLEAR THE PATH IS, "WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." That word "let" is a very curious word, because it signifies two opposite things. "Let" is an old-fashioned word which sometimes signifies "hinder." "He that letteth shall be taken away"—that is, "He that hindereth." But here, in our text, it means the removing of all hindrance. "Let him come"—methinks I hear Jehovah speaking this. Here is the fountain of love and mercy. But you are too unworthy, you are too vile. Hear Jehovah! He cries, "Let him come, he is willing. Stand back! doubts and fears; away with you, let him come; make a straight road; let him

come if he be but willing." Then the devil himself comes forward, and striding across the way, he says to the poor trembling soul, "I will spill thy blood; thou shalt never have mercy. I defy thee; thou shalt never believe in Christ, and never be saved." But Christ says, "Let him come"; and Satan, strong though he be, quails beneath Jehovah's voice, and Jesus drives him away, and the path stands clear, nor can sin, nor death, nor hell, block up the way when Jehovah Jesus says, "Let him come." Standing one day in the court-house, some witness was required, I forget his name; it may have been Brown, for instance, in one moment the name was announced, "Brown, Samuel Brown"; by and by twenty others take up the cry, "Samuel Brown, Samuel Brown." There was seen a man pushing his way through; "Make room," said he, "make room, his honour calls me," and though there were many in his path they gave way, because his being called was a sufficient command to them, not to hinder him, but to let him come. And now, soul, if thou be a willing sinner, though thy name is not mentioned—if thou be a willing sinner, thou art as truly called as though thou wert called by name, and therefore, push through thy fears. Make elbow room, and come; they that would stop thee are craven cowards. He has said, "Let him come," and they cannot keep you back; Jehovah has said, "Let him come," and it is yours now to say, "I will come. IV. THE CONDITION WHICH IS THE DEATH OF ALL CONDITIONS—LET HIM TAKE IT FREELY. Methinks I see one here who is saying, "I would be saved and I will do what I can to be worthy of it." The fountain is free, and he comes with his halfpenny in his hand, and that a bad one, and he says, "Here, sir, give me a cup of this living water to drink; I am well worthy of it, for see the price is in my hand." Why, man, if thou could'st bring the wealth of Potosi, or all the diamonds of Galconda, and all the pearls of Ormuz, you could not buy this most costly thing. Put up your money, you could not have it for gold or silver. The man brings his merit, but heaven is not to be sold to meritmongers. Or perhaps you say, "I will go to church regularly, I will give to the poor, I will attend my meeting-house, I will take a sitting, I will be baptized, I will do this and the other, and then no doubt I shall have the water of life." Back, miserable herd, bring not your rags and rubbish to God, He wants them not. Stand back, you insult the Almighty when you tender anything as payment. Back with ye; He invites not such as you to come. He says come freely. He wants nothing to recommend you. He needs no recommendation. You want no good works. Do not bring any. But you have no good feelings. Nevertheless you are willing, therefore come. He wants no good feelings of you. You have no belief and no repentance, yet nevertheless you are willing. Do not try to get them yourself—come to Him, and He will give them to you. Come just as you are; it is "freely," "without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him come." Let him bring nothing to recommend him. Let him not imagine he can give any payment to God, or any ransom for his soul; for the one condition that excludes all conditions is, "Let him come and take the water of life freely." There is a man of God here who has drank of the river of the water of life many times; but he says, "I want to know more of Christ, I want to have nearer fellowship with Him; I want to enter more closely into the mystery of His sacrifice; I want to understand more and more of the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be made conformable unto His death." Well, believer, drink freely. You have filled your bowl of faith once, and you drank the draught off; fill it again, drink again, and keep on drinking. Put your mouth to the fountain if you will drink right on. As good Rutherford says in one of his letters, "I have been sinking my bucket down into the well full often, but now my thirst after Christ has become so insatiable that I long to put the well itself to my lips and drain it all, and drink right on." Well, take it freely as much as ever you can. (C. H. Spurgeon.) Let him that heareth say, Come.—*The great commission*.—It is midnight in the crowded city. A million of people, weary with the cares and burdens of the day, have sought relief in sleep. In thousands of houses the lights are extinguished, and nothing breaks the silence of healthy repose. From an upper window, unseen of any, came a puff of smoke and curled upward into the night air. The watchman passed the building, and, to his observation, all was safe. He turned the corner of his beat, but a steady column of smoke was rising in place of the single puff. Ere he returns to point of view a fiery wave is rolling up to heaven. The heated air has waked a current, and the fire-fiends are in glee as through the thin partitions of the blocks the greedy flames make their way. Who shall arouse the sleeping city? Who shall save the dwellers in yonder house, already lighted with the reflected beams as

though the devils were dancing on its rafters in glee at its speedy destruction? Must we wait for the city's appointment, the mayor's seal, the official's paper? Let him that seeth cry, "Fire!" Let him that heareth cry, "Fire!" and roll the cry in deafening thunders on till every soul is stirred, every family safe. The possession of a tongue is the evidence of heaven's commission—the roaring flame is the voice of authority commanding to immediate alarm, to instant toil, and none may find excuse from blame who withhold their cries as they stand beside the charred, disfigured bodies of the unalarmed. Here is the ground for universal Christian labour. The dangerous exposure of man voices the Divine commission to each. Let us try again: The clouds refused their moisture, and the hot sun poured incessantly upon the dry and parching earth. The seed lost its power of reproduction; fruit juices dried in the vine and tree; grass withered in the field, and when the winds of autumn blew not a barn held any treasure, not a home had any provision. The days of famine came; children cried for food their parents could not give; infants died upon the famished breasts of their mothers; strong men crept about in the helplessness of infancy; the flocks were destroyed; weeping and wailing were on every side. The dreadful news was sent to distant lands, and the cry for bread burdened every breeze. The eager watchers sat upon the mountains and gazed upon the far-off sea. At length, slow rising on the distant edge, a sail appears; with beating hearts they watch; nearer it comes, sailing to their relief. The shore is reached; it is the relief-ship, crammed with bread and fruits of life. The busy hands roll the cargo out and spread it on the shore and welcome all. The starving are at home. The dying want only a crust of bread to bring them back to life again. And now in rich abundance plenty for all is heaped upon the land. The few upon the border satisfy their wants; the multitudes beyond the hill that skirts the beach are ignorant of any provision, and as the minutes pass their lives go out. Who shall proclaim that plenty waits their coming? Who shall carry the glad news over the hills into the inland cities that the suffering is at an end and there is enough for all? Let him that has a voice cry, "Bread upon the shore!" and him that heareth cry, "Bread upon the shore!" till the echo rings through the whole famished land and has fallen upon every ear and the multitudes are flocking to satisfy their wants. What shall be said of him who, knowing the destitution and made acquainted with the supply, coolly declares, "Let them find it out for themselves. I have eaten." Or who is content to let only the appointed herald make proclamation once for all? What shall be said of him who sees a starving family, notes the faltering steps, the hollow cheeks, the tear-dimmed eye, the haggard look, and ventures no information that the food has come? Again, we have found a call for universal Christian toil emphasised by supply as well as need. Heaven cries to each through teeming bounty for all. "O that the Christian world would wake to faithfulness, and when the Spirit and the Bride has said, 'Come,' even he that heareth would say, 'Come.'" The great realities of the Christian faith demand individual effort for their promulgation. I. THE DANGER OF THE SOUL CALLS FOR THE ALARM CRY OF EACH. If the flames of a burning city call to each to give alarm, how much more the flames that throw their glare upon the living soul? We need not cross the borders of this world, nor travel out of the circle of personal acquaintance, to find consuming men, burning with a heat that stirs the pity which they treat with scorn. Think of the pitiful crowds of women out of whose being all trace of mother-love is burned, all tender affections gone—sweetness, kindness, virtue—the very ashes of all nobleness blown away, and the bestial fires still glowing in their souls; yet they were fair, favoured, honoured as any till the torch was applied, the conflagration started, and no soul sought to quench it. There is no soul in all the world to which the fiery torch of sin has not been placed. The peril of each is imminent. The watchman passes by but does not see the smouldering passion, the heated imagination. The inflamed soul is careless of others. But there are those who have been dashed with the waters of life and see and know the increasing danger; there are those who have themselves been plucked as brands from the burning. They note the first puff that indicates in their friend, in a passer-by, the kindled fire; they see the glare in the eye, on the cheek, in the spirit; that detects the glow that heralds the blazing city of the soul; honour, honesty, obedience to God, regard for human rights, child-love, wife-love, even self-love, are wrapped in smoke and flame, and yet the cry of alarm is withheld. Seize the child with blazing garments and wrap her in a rug, no matter who she is, no matter where she stands; it shall save a life. Raise the cry for instant help. Summon the ambulance. This is the voice of

humanity. How much louder then should be the call, how much more vigorous the effort to relieve the endangered soul! Begin in your own home to-day where the danger is truly personal. Is it enough that you talk of all matters but the soul's escape from sin? Is it enough that the preacher cries out in trumpet-tones, "Let him that heareth say, Come?" Assail each ear with the cry that God has put upon your lips. II. THE PROVISION FOR SAVING THE SOUL CALLS FOR INDIVIDUAL PROCLAMATION. If the sea-side watchers, failing to inform the famine land of plenty, deserve the detestation of mankind, what is the righteous judgment on him who fails to inform of the spiritual supply for endangered and perishing souls? "Let him that heareth say, Come." It is not the results of his own investigations that man is sent to proclaim. It is of the glorious provision of God. Not the subtleties of abstruse metaphysical reasoning, nor the teachings of learned scientists, but pardon for the guilty, a Saviour for the lost, he is to shout and whisper into every ear, that the dying may hear it and never die, that the living may catch its meaning and live for ever. 'Tis not a call for the investigation of provision, but for its distribution. Its summons is not to the trained scholars of the land alone, to the skilful reasoners, to the eloquent lips, but to hearers of every class. The sacred privilege, the solemn duty, opens before every one who hears to proclaim the mercy and the grace of God toward men to give hope to the hopeless, courage to the faint, a Saviour to all. The commission bears no time limitation. Not once a week, when Sabbath bells ring, but every day and every time a needy soul is met may the word be spoken, "Come to the open fountain! Come to the bread of life!" I have read that during a heavy storm off the coast of Spain a dismantled merchantman was observed by a British frigate drifting before the gale. Every eye and glass were on her, and a canvas shelter on the deck almost level with the sea suggested the idea that there yet might be life on board. Instantly the order sounded to put the ship about, and a boat puts off with instructions to bear down upon the wreck and rescue life if aught remained. Away after that drifting hulk go the gallant men, risking their own lives on the mountain billows of the roaring sea. Reaching it they cry aloud, and from the canvas screen creeps out what proved to be the body of a man so shrivelled and wasted as to be easily lifted on board. In tender pity the rough men rub the chilled and wasted body. About to pull away, the saved man moves and moans and whispers, and as they listen they can catch the muttered words, "There is another man." The saved would save his friend, though almost in the hands of death. It is the lesson for us all. While another man treads the globe unsaved by the blood of Christ, ho, brethren to the rescue! Not in the feebleness of your own strength, but in obedience to Him who sends the thrilling message to all whose ears have been touched with the heavenly music, saying, "Let him that heareth say, Come." (*S. H. Virgin, D.D.*) *Let him that heareth say, Come:*—1. Notice the party addressed: "Him that heareth." There is no reference here to age, or position, or gifts, or learning. 2. Observe the terms in which this duty is prescribed. He that heareth is to "say, Come." The terms here used are very general, and in many respects indefinite. If you cannot "say, Come," in the church, you can say it in the shop, or at the fireside, or on the roads. The Sabbath, for example, is a most suitable time to say, "Come," when the minds of men are less occupied with worldly cares and business; or a time of affliction, when the heart is likely to be somewhat softened. I. SHOW HOW THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT IS CONFIRMED AND EXEMPLIFIED BY OTHER PASSAGES IN THE WORD OF GOD (*Psa. lvi. 16; Isa. ii. 3; Zech. viii. 21; John i. 41, 45, 46; iv. 29, &c.*). It is no new commandment, but one which has been from the beginning, that they who have accepted the invitation of the gospel should straightway invite others to the feast. II. THE MOTIVES THAT SHOULD STIMULATE US TO CARRY OUT THIS EXHORTATION. 1. For Christ's sake we ought to say, Come. How then can we pretend to love Christ if we are habitually neglecting to say, Come? Does it not evince base ingratitude if we are not working for Him who did and suffered so much for us? 2. The condition of Christless souls may well excite our pity, and prompt us to active exertion on their behalf. 3. For our own sake we ought to say, Come. However difficult a duty is, it is never for our interest to neglect it. And think what a noble service this is! It makes us partakers with Christ in His work. Christian activity, like mercy, is twice blessed. In watering others our own souls are also watered. "A traveller was crossing mountain heights alone over almost untrodden snows. Warning had been given him that if slumber pressed down his weary eyelids they would inevitably be sealed in death. For a time he went bravely along his dreary path.

But with the deepening shade and freezing blast of night there fell a weight upon his brain and eyes which seemed to be irresistible. In vain he tried to reason with himself; in vain he strained his utmost energies to shake off that fatal heaviness. At this crisis of his fate his foot struck against a heap that lay across his path. No stone was that, although no stone could be colder or more lifeless. He stooped to touch it, and found a human body half buried beneath a fresh drift of snow. The next moment the traveller had taken a brother in his arms, and was chafing his chest, and hands, and brow, breathing upon the stiff, cold lips the warm breath of his living soul, pressing the silent heart to the beating pulses of his own generous bosom. The effort to save another had brought back to himself life, warmth, and energy. He saved his brother and was saved himself. Go thou and do likewise." Earnest efforts for the salvation of others will save us many a bitter regret. III.

DIRECTIONS as to how you are "to say, Come." 1. Humbly. Beware of cherishing high thoughts of yourselves, as if through any merit or efforts of your own you had attained your present position. Beware of despising any to whom you say Come, as if you had all your lives been immensely superior to them. 2. Earnestly. Such awful realities as the soul, sin, Christ, death, judgment, eternity, are not matters to be lightly or coldly spoken of. 3. Believingly and prayerfully. Have confidence in the power of God's truth when it is accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit. And, having this faith, let your prayer ascend to God on behalf of your unconverted friends, and on your own behalf, that you may be rightly guided in saying Come to them. 4. Perseveringly. Be not discouraged by even many rebuffs and refusals. Give none up in despair. Remember how long-suffering the Lord was to you, and be you as long-suffering towards others.

(J. G. Dalglish.) *The duty of missionary enterprise*.—Let me give you one or two reasons why missions are especially incumbent upon this nation. 1. First, because we owe to them immeasurable benefits. I throw in without estimate all that missions have done for the cause of science, though there is scarcely one single science that does not owe to them an immense advance. I throw in without estimate all they have done to the cause of civilisation, though no less a witness than Charles Darwin said that the lesson of the missionary was the enchanter's wand. I throw in without estimate all that they have done for the diminution of human misery, the suppression of war, the spread of commerce, the abolition of execrable cruelties. "It is Christ," says Chunder Sen—and you could have no more unprejudiced witness—"it is Christ, and not the British Government, that rules India." "Our hearts," he says, speaking for his countrymen, "our hearts have been conquered, not by armies, not by your gleaming bayonets, and your fiery cannon, but by a higher and different power, and that power is Christ," and "it is for Jesus," he adds, "and for Jesus only, that we will give up the precious diadem of India." Without missions the sagacity of Lawrence and the heroic courage of Havelock would have been in vain. 2. Because to us of this British race God has undoubtedly assigned the whole future of the world. Before a century is over the English-speaking people will be one-third of the whole human race. From this little island have sprung the millions of America, of Australasia, of colonies which are empires on which the sun never sets. Why is it that God has thus enlarged Japhet? Was it for the benefit of brewers and gin distillers? Was it that the coffers of our merchants might burst with their accumulated hoards? 3. Because, if our numbers have increased fivefold, our wealth at the same time has increased sevenfold. For what cause did God pour this river of gold into the coffers of our people? Was it that we should settle on our lees and live in ease on the earth? Or was it rather that we should send forth that great angel who has the everlasting gospel in his hands? 4. Because we have taken with us all over the world a ruinous and a clinging curse, the curse of drink. It is not the only wrong we have done by any means. The diseases we have inflicted have been bad enough, but our drink is worst of all; and as yet the conscience of this nation is as hard as the nether millstone to the fact of our guilt. Let the shameful truth be spoken, that mainly because of drink our footsteps amongst savage races have again and again been footsteps dyed in blood. We have cursed all India with our drink and our drunkenness; and at this moment, after so short an occupation, we are cursing Egypt with it too. We have poured upon these nations the vials of this plague of ours—are we not bound to give them the antidote? 5. I might dwell on many more reasons, above all the truly apostolical succession of heroic personalities inspired by the immediate Spirit of God whom missions have called forth, of men who, even in this nineteenth century, have won

the purple crown of martyrdom, and shown us that there may be something higher and more heroic in religion than the quotidian arguing of our religious squabbles and our ceremonial routine. But this only I will add, whenever a cause is noble, and is necessary, and calls for self-denial, it always evokes a mushroom crop of stale epigrams expressing the wit of prudential selfishness and the excuse of close-fisted greed. Do not, then, be misled by the plausible devil's plea that we have too much heathenism at home to trouble ourselves with heathenism abroad. We have heathenism enough at home, God knows, but when long ago a member of the Massachusetts legislature said, "We have not religion enough at home, and cannot afford to send any abroad," a wiser and sincerer man than he answered, "The religion of Christ is such that the more you send abroad the more you have at home." (*Dean Farrar.*) *Babes in grace can say, "Come":*—There is your qualification; you have proved the truth of God in your own soul, and so can speak experimentally; you have found Christ; you have drunk the living water, and you can say, "Come." I wanted a drink one day in a thirsty place in Italy, and by the coachman's help I asked at a house for water. The owner of the house was busy and did not come to show me where the water could be found; but he sent a girl with me; she was very little, but she was quite big enough, for she led the way to a well, and I was soon refreshed. She had not to make a well, but only to point it out, and therefore her youth was no disadvantage. We have not to invent salvation, but to tell of it; and therefore you who are but babes in grace can perform the work. You have heard the voice of Jesus say, "Stoop down, and drink, and live": go forth and echo that voice till thousands quench their thirst. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Bring another brother:*—During the exhibition of 1867 in Paris, a minister met with an instance of direct labour for souls, which he states he can never forget. In conversation with an engineer employed on one of the pleasure-boats which ply on the Seine, the discovery was made that the man was a Christian, and on the inquiry being put, by what means he was converted, he replied: "My mate is a Christian, and continually he told me of the great love of Jesus Christ, and His readiness to save, and he never rested until I was a changed man. For it is a rule in our church that when a brother is converted, he must go and bring another brother; and when a sister is converted, she must go and bring another sister; and so more than a hundred of us have been recovered to the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus." This is the way in which the gospel is to spread through the whole world. By the silent force of a consistent life, by the prevalence of importunate prayer, by the seasonable testimony of our lips in converse with our fellow-men, let us love to make Jesus known. *Spreading the tidings:*—An English Presbyterian missionary relates an interesting incident which occurred as he was halting for refreshments under a great tree on the boundaries of the Fukien province. He chanced to overhear a Chinaman speaking with an unusually pleasant and impressive voice, and giving to the bystanders an account of the Christian religion. He did this as if uttering the deepest convictions of his own heart. The missionary afterwards learned that this man had been a patient in one of the hospitals, and though not well he was travelling towards his home, and on his way was preaching the gospel which he had himself heard. How many such cases there may be we do not know, but it is interesting to find that at least some of those who are casually reached are becoming earnest promulgators of the truth they have heard. *Taking good news home:*—A New Zealand girl, who was brought over to England to be educated, in the course of time became a true Christian. When the time came for her to return to her own country, some of her playmates endeavoured to dissuade her. They said, "Why do you want to go back to New Zealand? You have become accustomed to England. You love its shady lanes and clover-fields. Besides, you may be shipwrecked on the return voyage. And if you should get back safe your own people may kill you and eat you. Everybody there has forgotten you." "What," she said, "do you think that I could keep the Good News to myself? Do you think that I could be content with having got pardon, and peace, and eternal life for myself, and not go and tell my dear father and mother how they may get it too? I would go if I had to swim there!" And let him that is athirst come. —*Christ's last invitation from the throne:*—I. Now, first let me suggest the QUESTION—TO WHOM CHRIST FROM THE THRONE THUS CALLS? The persons addressed are designated by two descriptions: they that are "athirst," and those that "will." In one aspect of the former designation it is universal; in another aspect it is by no means so. There are many men that thirst;

and, strange as it seems, will not to be satisfied. The first qualification is need, and the sense of need. These two things, alas! do not go together. There is a universal need stamped upon men, by the very make of their spirits, which declares that they must have something or some one external to themselves, on whom they can rest, and from whom they can be satisfied. The heart yearns for another's love; the mind is restless till it grasps reality and truth. No man is at rest unless he is living in conscious amity with, and in possession of, the Father's heart and the Father's strength. But half of you do not know what ails you. You recognise the gnawing discontent. There is such a thing as misinterpreting the cry of the Spirit, and that misinterpretation is the crime and the misery of millions of men. That they shall stifle their true need under a pile of worldly things, that they shall direct their longings to what can never satisfy them, is indeed the state and the misery of many of us. Perverted tastes are by no means confined to certain forms of disease of the body. There is the same perversion of taste in regard of higher things. You and I are made to feed upon God, and we feed upon ourselves, and one another, and the world, and all the trash, in comparison to our immortal desires and capacities, which we find around us. Do you interpret aright the immortal thirst of your soul? Now, I daresay there are many of my hearers who are not aware of this thirst of the soul. No! you have crushed it out, and for a time you are quite satisfied with worldly success, or with the various objects on which you have set your hearts. It will not last! So far as the sense of need goes this text may not appeal to you. So far as the reality of the need goes it certainly does. Then, look at the other designation of the persons to whom Christ's merciful summons comes: "Whosoever will let him take." There is nothing sadder, there is nothing more certain, than that we poor little creatures can assert our will in the presence of the Divine lovingkindness, and can thwart, so far as we are concerned, the counsel of God against ourselves. "How often would I have gathered," &c. I do not enter now upon the various reasons or excuses which men offer for this disinclination to accept the Divine mercy, but I do venture to say that unwillingness to be saved upon Christ's conditions underlies a vast deal—not all, but a vast deal—of the supposed intellectual difficulties of men in regard to the gospel. The will bribes the understanding in a great many regions. But for the most of you who stand apart from Jesus Christ this is the truth, that your attitude is a merely negative one. It is not that you will not to have Him but that you do not will to have Him. You know the old proverb: One man can take a horse to the water, ten cannot make him drink. We can bring you to the water, or the water to you, but neither Christ nor His servants can put the refreshing, life-giving liquid into your mouth if you lock your lips so tight that a bristle could not go in between them. Wishing is one thing; willing is quite another. Wishing to be delivered from the gnawing restlessness of a hungry heart, and to be satisfied, is one thing; willing to accept the satisfaction which Christ gives on the terms which Christ lays down is, alas! quite another. II. That brings me, secondly, to say a word about WHAT CHRIST FROM HEAVEN THUS OFFERS TO US ALL. The water of life is not merely living water, in the sense that it flashes and sparkles and flows; but it is water which communicates life. "Life" here is to be taken in that deep, pregnant, comprehensive sense in which the Apostle John uses it in all his writings. The first thought that emerges from this "water of life," considered as being the sum of all that Christ communicates to humanity is—then, where it does not run or is not received, there is death. Ah, the true death is separation from God, and the true separation from God is not brought about because He is in heaven, and we are upon earth; or because He is infinite and incomprehensible, and we are poor creatures of an hour, but because we depart from Him in heart and mind, and, as another apostle says, are dead in trespasses and sins. Death in life, a living death, is far more dreadful than when the poor body is laid quiet upon the bed, and the spirit has left the pale cheeks. And that death is upon us, unless it has been banished from us by a draught of the water of life. But, then, besides all these thoughts, there come others, on which I need not dwell, that in that great emblem of the water that gives life is included the satisfaction of all desires, meeting and over-answering all expectations, filling up every empty place in the heart, in the hopes, in the whole inward nature of man, and lavishing upon him all the blessings which go to make up true gladness, true nobleness, and dignity. Nor does the eternal life cease when physical death comes. The river—if I might somewhat modify the figure with which I am dealing, and regard the man himself in his Christian experience as the river—flows through a narrow, dark gorge, like one of

the canons on American streams, and down to its profoundest depths no sunlight can travel. III. Lastly, WHAT CHRIST FROM HEAVEN CALLS US TO DO. "He that is athirst let him come; and whosoever will let him take!" The two things, coming and taking, as it seems to me, cover substantially the same ground. So let us put away the metaphors of "coming" and "taking" and lay hold of the Christ-given interpretation of them, and say the one thing that Christ asks me to do is to trust my poor, sinful self wholly and confidently and constantly and obediently to Him. That is all. Ah! All! And that is just where the pinch comes. "My father! my father!" remonstrated Naaman's servants, when he was in a towering passion because he was told to go wash in the Jordan; "if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, wash and be clean." I do believe that great multitudes of people would rather, like the Hindoos, stick hooks in the muscles of their backs, and swing at the end of a rope if that would get heaven for them, than simply be content to come in *formâ pauperis*, and owe everything to Christ's grace, and nothing to their own works. "Let him take." Well, that being translated, too, is but the exercise of lowly trust in Him. Faith is the hand that, being put out, grasps this great gift. You must make the universal blessing your own. Are you athirst? I know you are. Do you know it? Are you willing to take Christ's salvation on Christ's terms, and to live by faith in Him, communion with, and obedience to Him? If you are, then earth may yield or deny you its waters, but you will not be dependent on them. When all the land is parched and baked, and every surface well run dry, you will have a spring that fails not, and the water that Christ "will give you will be in you a fountain of water leaping up into everlasting life." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.—*Whosoever will*:—The Bible invitation turns on the human will. It invites every man that chooses, but there it stops. The Bible rests on the assumption that every man, if he enters into life, must enter into it by his own free choice. Jesus Christ comes with invitations, but they are only invitations. He opens the door, but He allows men to come in or stay out, as they choose. He offers help, but He only offers it. If salvation were what a great many people even in our day seem to imagine it to be, God might give it to men whether they wanted it or not. If it were getting into a beautiful city, with domes and palaces and pearly gates and golden streets, God could take the man and put him there and lock the gates and shut him in. If it were getting into a certain outward circumstance, God could put a man there whether he chose or not. Virtue is the free choice of the will. There is, therefore, no way by which God Almighty can make a man virtuous against his will. Is not God omnipotent? What do you mean by omnipotence? Do you mean, Cannot God make a man virtuous whether he wills to be virtuous or not? No! because virtuous is willing to be virtuous. That is virtue. If God could make a man virtuous despite himself, he would not be virtuous when he was made. Virtue is the free choice of righteousness, and the free revolt from that which is unrighteous. God can confer a certain measure of happiness; God can surround a man with certain conditions that will help him to virtue; God can bring influences about him that will take him away from vice; but in the last analysis every man must choose for himself what shall be his life, because life is choice and choice is life. Have you a wish, a purpose to be a nobler, a truer man? Then there is help for you. If not, then there is nothing to do except to wait until you do have such a purpose. Let me take this simple proposition to classify men, measuring them by this one simple standard. First, then, in the moral scale, is the Pharisee. He may be in the Church, he may be outside the Church; for the Pharisee is a man who is contented with himself. He has no moral ideals; he has no dissatisfaction with the past; he has no aspiration for a nobler future; he lives from hand to mouth; he lives from day to day. If he has any question to ask of the Christian, the question is, "How will it help me? If I am a Christian man, will God help me in my business? If I am a Christian man, shall I get more honour, more pleasure, more satisfaction out of life?" Above this Pharisee is the man who has some dissatisfaction for the past and some aspiration for the future, and does want to be a better man. Perhaps some minister has touched some chord in his heart, and his soul has responded. Perhaps some sudden sin has shaken him out of his self-satisfaction. Perhaps he has broken down just where he thought he was strong, yielded to some sudden temptation, and found he was weak when he did not know that he was weak. In some such way he has come into a dissatisfaction with himself and a desire for something better and nobler. The man who has been in the gutter and is ashamed

of the smell of the gutter, the man who has any desire toward a better life or any hate of the life that is past, goes into the kingdom of God before the man who is satisfied with himself. But aspiration is not enough; dreaming is not doing, dreaming is not even wishing. The man has dreamed something better, the man has had some dissatisfaction with his past; and now out of this dissatisfaction and out of this dream there comes a wish. He wishes to be a better man; perhaps he even prays to be a better man; perhaps he even goes to a minister or friend and says, "What can I do to be a better man?" The life that now is awakened in him is more than an aspiration; it is a definite desire. But desiring is not enough. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Aye, if he will. If he is dissatisfied with the past, if he is desirous of something better in the future, and so desirous that he chooses it, and chooses it now, the doors are open to him. (*L. Abbott, D.D.*) *The last invitation in the Bible*:—I. THE GREATNESS OF THE BLESSING OFFERED. II. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE TERMS ON WHICH THE OFFER IS MADE. We have but to come and take. We are at a distance naturally, and alienated by wicked works; therefore we must turn and "come." III. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE TO WHOM THE BLESSING IS OFFERED. IV. THE UNANIMITY OF THOSE WHO OFFER THE BLESSING. There are four voices; and none of them are discordant, or "without significance." Four witnesses to the greatness and freeness of the gospel; four who call us away to the Water of Life. (*Alex. Warrack.*) *The gospel invitation*:—I. THE BLESSINGS OFFERED. These are represented to us under the image of "water." 1. Water is an element absolutely necessary, in the present constitution of things, to the preservation and continuance of life. 2. Water is an element productive of purity. 3. Water is an element which refreshes the weary, and invigorates the weak. II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THESE BLESSINGS ARE OFFERED. III. THE TERMS UPON WHICH THESE BLESSINGS ARE OFFERED. Why are they free? 1. One reason is, that they are above all price, and though they had been much less worth than they are, we had nothing to give. We must have them freely or not at all. The best of God's temporal gifts are free, the air that we breathe is free, the light of heaven is free, the sun descends upon the just and the unjust. 2. But, again, these blessings are offered freely to us, because the price of them has already been paid by another. (*Jas. Clason.*) *The last message of God to men*:—I. "THE SPIRIT SAITH COME, AND TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." To the Holy Spirit in an especial manner, are to be ascribed, from first to last, the conversion, the regeneration, the sanctification, and the ultimate salvation, of every sinner. But even if you do not belong to the number of those to whom the invitation of the text has been brought home with saving power, yet it is no less certain that the Spirit of God is in many different ways still addressing you with the invitation to come and take of the water of life freely. You cannot deny that, in the course of Divine Providence, you have had the Bible, which the Spirit dictated concerning Christ, put into your hands in a language which you could both read and understand; that you have been familiar, even from your youth up, with the great truths which it proclaims of your own lost condition by nature, and of the method of recovery through a Saviour; and that these truths have been pressed home upon your attention so often and in so many ways as to leave you without excuse, if still careless or unmindful of them. Nay, is it not possible for you to recollect certain seasons in your past history, when Divine things were more peculiarly brought home to your hearts; a season of affliction perhaps, when you were clearly taught the unsatisfactory nature of present enjoyments; a season of personal danger or family bereavement, when the thought of death and eternity overawed your soul; a season of conviction, when such views of your own character as sinners, and such impressions of your own danger as rebels before God, were awakened, as almost forced you to cry out in terror, What must I do to be saved? You must be constrained to admit that every such event was sent by Him for the purposes of your spiritual awakening and conversion. They were so many distinct demands upon you on His part to consider your ways, and to repent and be saved. II. "THE BRIDE SAITH, COME, AND TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." If we view the Church generally, as a community of believers separated from the world around them by the possession of the peculiar faith and privileges and hopes of Christ, or if we view the Church more especially in reference to the office-bearers whom Christ has appointed, and the ordinances He has established in the midst of it; in either case it must be apparent that one of its grand purposes is to hold forth a witness in behalf of the gospel among men, and to make provision for the

pressing of its invitations and its claims upon all. The very fact of the continued existence for eighteen hundred years of a visible community of saints, divided from the rest of mankind, and united together by the belief and practice of the gospel, notwithstanding of the enmity and persecution of a hostile world, is the strongest of all historical testimonies to the Divine and saving power of that faith which they profess. Every saint within that Church has been a witness on behalf of the truth to the men of the age and the place where he lived. His faith, his hope, his holy life, his triumphant death, have each been a testimony to others that was neither silent nor unseen. And when we consider the provision that has been made in the ordinance of a stated ministry, and of the administration of the sacraments, for the preservation and furtherance of the gospel in the world, we cannot fail to perceive the force and propriety of the statement of the text, that "the Bride," or the Church, joins with the Spirit of God in the invitation to sinners to take of the water of life freely. III. "LET HIM THAT HEARETH SAY, COME, AND TAKE OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." There is no man, of whatever character, that either lives or dies for himself alone (Rom. xiv. 7); he must be the means of spreading either a salutary or a pernicious influence around him. If a man is still under the bondage of sin, and cherishes in his bosom a principle of ungodliness, he will become the centre, so far as his influence extends, whence moral evil is diffused about him. If, on the contrary, he has been himself converted, and regenerated, his life and character will bear testimony to the truths which he has believed; and he must, from the very nature of the thing, become a witness for God and the gospel in the sight of all with whom he associates. And how much more will this be the case, when the Christian sees in the common ruin in which all men are by nature involved, the equal necessity which all have for some method of recovery and salvation; and when he recognises in the gospel, which he himself has believed, a provision made for reaching the case and ministering to the wants of all. Having tasted of the waters of salvation himself, he will be anxious to unseal the living fountain to his fellowmen. And even did he bear no testimony to the Saviour, but that which his faith and holiness and heavenly peace and joy afforded, yet these alone would speak in a language which could not be misunderstood, and would proclaim to all the grace and blessedness of the gospel. It is thus that not only the Church in its collective character, but every individual believer that is gathered within its pale, becomes a missionary of the faith to press its claims and its importance upon the attention and the consciences of his fellowmen; and while the Spirit is striving with the hearts of sinners in secret, and the Bride is openly proclaiming the tidings of salvation to all, the man whose ears have been opened to hear and receive the truth, will find in that fact both the warrant and the will to join in the united invitation to others to "come, and take of the waters of life freely." IV. "LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST COME; AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." The expression, "whosoever will," is evidently applicable to the case of every human being without exception; and is plainly demonstrative of the freeness with which the gospel invitation is addressed to all, without reference to character, or circumstance, or condition. The expression, "he that is athirst," is no less universally applicable to all mankind, inasmuch as it is descriptive of the condition of every human being who is not in possession of happiness up to the full measure of his desires, and who still longs after the experience of a peace and blessedness which may be permanent and satisfying. Every son of man who feels in his heart one unsatisfied desire, one disappointed hope, one bereaved affection, one yearning after happiness which he does not yet enjoy; in short, any human being that knows the existence of human feeling within his bosom, comes under the description of "he that is athirst." The two expressions, then, are virtually the same; they embrace essentially the same description of persons; and they prove that the invitation of the text is not confined to any particular class or character of individuals, but is equally and unreservedly addressed to all. Have you never felt the hopelessness of those efforts by which you have sought to work out a justifying righteousness for yourselves, and earn, as it were, your own acceptance with God? Then unto you is this salvation offered, freely and without price. (*Jas. Bannerman, D.D.*) *The will*:—I. WHAT IS A WILL? It is that faculty of the soul which is governed by the understanding, but which is itself the governor of the actions. II. WHAT CAN THE WILL OF THE NATURAL MAN PERFORM? Anything consistent with the strength of body and mind which the person may possess; for instance, a man may have a will to walk forty miles in

a day, and yet his strength may only be sufficient for half that distance; he may have a will to be a great scholar, and his mind be incapable of containing what he desires to know—it may perform any external act, may cause him to take medicine, but cannot insure health; may make him a good husband, attend to all relative duties, and even external acts of religion, but nothing whatever of a spiritual nature. III. HOW DO ANY POSSESS THE WILL MENTIONED IN MY TEXT? Not by compulsion—the will cannot be forced, for then it would cease to be a will; but by being changed by the supernatural power and agency of the Holy Ghost, as the terms conversion and regeneration used to mark this change plainly prove. (*A. Hewlett, M.A.*)

Vers. 18, 19. If any man shall add unto these things.—*The Divine Word, and the doom of its defacers*:—I. THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S WORD. Man may not intermeddle with it, either to add or to take away. Can man improve the works of God?—the mountains, rivers, flowers?—the blue sky, the stars, the sun? Even so is the Word of God too perfect for him to touch. II. THE HONOUR GOD PUTS ON IT. He has magnified it, even above His works; so that he who disparages the Word of God is more guilty than he who disparages the works of God. It is the fullest expression of His mind, the completest revelation of His character. III. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARD TO IT. It is not given us for mere speculation or gratification; but for something far higher. We are responsible for the way we treat it, study it, profit by it. Its perfection makes our responsibility very great, and appeals to our consciences most powerfully. IV. THE SIN OF TAMPERING WITH IT. Every low thought about the Bible is sin. Every attempt to touch it, either in the way of addition or subtraction, is sin. V. THE DANGER OF MEDDLING WITH IT. The danger is exceeding great; and the punishment awarded to the intermeddlers is the declaration of the danger. God will not be mocked in this thing. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Ver. 20. He which testifieth these things, saith, surely I come quickly.—*On the coming of Christ*:—I. SOME OF THE GREAT EVENTS WHICH WILL MOST UNQUESTIONABLY TAKE PLACE AT OUR SAVIOUR'S SECOND APPEARANCE. 1. He will come again with inexpressible dignity and grandeur. 2. The resurrection of the dead is another glorious result of our Saviour's second appearance. 3. The dissolution of this globe will be the awful consequence, also, of our Saviour's reappearance. II. FOR WHAT PURPOSE THESE GREAT EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE ON OUR SAVIOUR'S REAPPEARANCE. 1. Jesus will come again to vindicate the honour of the Divine administration, and to evince the admirable wisdom and justice with which it has been administered. 2. The eternal separation of the virtuous from the wicked. 3. The equitable and unerring distribution of eternal rewards and punishments which will then take place. Lessons: 1. The consideration of our Saviour's second coming to reward every one according to his works, should have a permanent influence on our present temper and conduct. 2. The appointment of our Saviour to be our Judge is a merciful condescension to the weakness and imperfection of our natures, which would be overwhelmed by the infinite splendour of that Almighty Being, in whose presence the angels cover their faces with their wings, which would be otherwise dazzled with such immensity of glory. (*A. Stirling, LL.D.*) Even so come, Lord Jesus.—*Man hailing the judgment*:—There are four states of mind amongst men in relation to the last day. Some are indifferent to it, as were the antediluvians in relation to the Deluge; some scornfully deny it, as did the infidels in the days of Peter; some are horror-stricken at it, as were the demoniacs in the time of Christ; and some welcome it, as John did now. Three things are implied in this last state of mind—I. A CONVICTION THAT SUCH A DAY WILL DAWN. II. A CONVICTION OF A PREPAREDNESS TO ENTER ON THE TRIAL. III. A CONVICTION THAT THE RESULTS OF THAT DAY WILL BE FRAUGHT WITH PERSONAL GOOD. (*Homilist.*) *Yearning for Christ*:—A state of expectation tries faith and feeds it too. The veil which hides, suggests. A doubtful bestowment, to be able to raise it before the time! Hope nurses energy. Energy is trained in mingled knowledge and ignorance. I. THE YEARNING OF OUR SOULS FOR THE FULLNESS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST. The life we live is a longing. There is discord which only Jesus can resolve. There is possibility which in the light of His presence will see this out into fact. Gloom, in which we wait with our eyes towards the east, waiting for the sun-rising. We are children crying for the Comforter. II. THE PURPOSE OF OUR HEARTS TO BE PREPARED FOR THE HIGHER SERVICE. Come and give us our place in Thy kingdom. Come and take up the

fruits of our life into Thy garner, and make them the seed-corn of the everlasting future. The response of the lips will be the key-note; the fullest most varied existence will never lose it; on that the music will rest and melt into the praise of Heaven. (*R. Redford, LL.B.*) *Sudden death*:—The primary reference in the words may be, and probably is, to His coming for the initiation of those august procedures in history which are prophetically recorded in the Book of Revelation; but also there may be an underlying reference in them to His appearing at death to the individual disciple. The death of the believer is always, in a true sense, the coming of Christ to him. Applying the words in this way, then, as having a possible personal relation to ourselves, the question naturally occurs: Can we take up and repeat this reply of the apostle, "Amen. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus?" John evidently spoke thus in all sincerity and solemn earnestness. But we may not feel, perhaps, that John was a type for us, since he surpassed us in so many things. He was "the beloved disciple." He had been admitted to a peculiar personal intimacy with Christ. Especially, perhaps, we think he could say this when he may have been at this time—it is not certain—in the decline of life, or already advanced in years; when, at any rate, he was dwelling in a world unfriendly to him and to his faith, without companions, without a home, a lonely exile upon the rock of Patmos. It was then only natural and proper, we may think, that he should utter this prayer to Christ. But we may not so freely repeat it after him. There is a certain tremor of hesitation, natural to the heart, in echoing the words. We have no right to offer such a prayer. Even John did not offer it until the Master had manifested to him His purpose of coming quickly, and then he simply responded to the declared will of the Lord. We may do that, I think, with equal cheerfulness and gladness. When the Master forewarns us that His coming is to be sudden and speedy, we may take up without hesitation, if we are His followers, the words of the apostle: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" The example of John justifies us in this. He was an eminent disciple; he had had peculiar intimacy of relation with the Master. But he was still a man who needed forgiveness, even as you and I do. He was a man only sanctified in part, as you and I are. Yet he spoke these words, because he knew the Master fully. He had known Him on earth, and he had now seen Him in heaven. He knew the sovereignty of the Lord, but he knew as well His spirit of self-sacrifice; he knew how He had died on the Cross when He need not have done so unless He had chosen, for the salvation of sinners. Therefore, knowing His tenderness as well as His holiness, His infinite sympathy as well as His sovereign and unlimited power, he could say: "Even so! I am not timid before Thy coming; Thy word does not smite me with fear. Come, Lord Jesus." If we are, then, in fellowship with John, through a similar faith in the Divine Master, we also may take up and echo his words. Consider also why Christ comes at death to His disciple; what things He comes to accomplish. 1. He comes for the recognition of character in His beloved. For this, in part, His approach and death are made. 2. He comes also for the consummation of character in the disciple; not only to recognise it, but to bring it to its completeness. Every Christian grace has its vital root in faith, that is, in loyal and undoubting confidence toward the Son of God. And precisely as this faith becomes clear and firm, in that proportion the graces which spring from it are multiplied and enriched, are raised to a sweeter and mightier supremacy. When, then, at last faith culminates in vision, and we see the Lord—not merely in the evangelical records, not merely in the worship of the Church, or its manifesting sacraments, but "face to face"—then every grace which has been within us, in element and germ, shall rise to sudden superlative completeness, and to the fulness of perfect exhibition. 3. He comes, too, for the coronation of character, as well as for its recognition and its supreme consummation. Character, rooted in faith towards Himself, is the one thing precious on earth to Christ. The production of it in the human soul was the very purpose of His coming in the incarnation. His whole life on earth bore evidently upon this result. Every miracle said, "Believe in Me." Every gracious word of promise attracted to such belief in Him. And when this faith is ready to be transferred to the skies, Christ comes at death to consummate and to crown it. That is the fulfilment of His purpose in Redemption. He must crown the spirit which He seeks and loves. Therefore it was that John could say, "Amen. Even so, Lord, come quickly." And so we need not, either of us, fear, if we are in the faith and fellowship of John, to take upon our lips the same sublime and solemn words. 4. I think that here is suggested a fair preliminary test of experience in us. Suppose that Christ were to come to us at this moment, that for us the earth

swung suddenly away into darkness and silence, that unto us the heavens were opened: would He find in us that which He at this instant would accept and approve? Should we be able to welcome Him now at that swift coming? 5. If we can meet this test we need no more to be afraid of sudden death. Within ourselves is that which Christ Himself hath wrought, in which He has gladness. Then we shall share, when we die, in the glory of the transfigured Lord; not seeing it merely, as silently and suddenly it came to the Apostles, but ourselves being participants in it. And that will be all that death is to the disciple. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.—The grace of Jesus Christ:—*It is the last text in the Bible and it fits well the last day of the year. It is well we should take a blessing to ourselves, or at least try to fancy that it may be ours, for we need it sorely on this day. Dwell as we will on the brighter side of things, life is very hard, and men and women are hard on one another, and we ourselves are growing hard, and that is the worst of all. We need something to soften, in no enfeebling way, the hardness of life, and of men, and of our own heart. And most of the blessings we seek of our own will, weaken our souls, and in the weakening make us harder in the future. But the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, if we could win it and take it, softens all things by making us stronger towards goodness and truth and righteousness and love. What is it? What is His grace? Whatever it is, it does not come from one who is ignorant of all we need. He has known to the full the weight of human suffering, and the blessing of His grace that is with us is brought home to us by that knowledge. Christ can give inspiration, can bless, and give of His power because He mastered the evil forces of life. None have ever done that so completely, but many can do it in His spirit. And those who do, can help and bless their fellows in proportion to their victory. Remember that this day, you who are in warfare with pain or guilt. You will be able to bring grace and blessing to others in the future, whatever your pain be now, if you conquer it. And, in order to conquer, win His grace who has conquered, and who will give it to you. That grace is, first, kindness, the goodwill of love. It is the showing forth of all those sweet and beautiful qualities which make home and social life so dear, and the showing forth of them in perfection. It is the filial tenderness which laid down the consciousness of genius and all its impulses for thirty years at the feet of His mother in a quiet and silent life and which won her pondering and passionate love. It is the penetrating love which saw into the character of His friends and made them believe in their own capacity for greatness, which led men like Peter and John and James to find out and love one another, which bound His followers together in a love that outlasted death. It is the tender insight which saw into the publican's heart, which when the sinner drew near in tears, believed in her repentance and exalted her into a saint, which had compassion on the multitude and on the weariness of a few, which wept over Jerusalem, which in all human life and the movement of its passions and hopes and faiths did, said, and thought the loving and just thing at the right moment, without doing or saying the weak thing. Think of it all, you who know the story, and an image of the grace of Christ as loving-kindness will grow before your soul. And it will be strange if you do not, ravished with the sight, say, "Let that blessed power be mine in life. May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with me." But there is more in it than this. Human love, left alone, spends itself only on those near to us, or on those that love us in return, and, in its form of kindness and pity, on those whom we compassionate. Kept within a narrow circle, it tends to have family or a social selfishness. Given only to those who suffer, it tends to become self-satisfied. To be perfect, it ought to reach, through frank forgiveness, those who injure us; through interest in the interests, ideas, and movements of human progress, those who are beyond our own circle, in our nation, nay, even in the world; and finally all men, those even who are our bitterest foes, through desire that they should have good and be good. It was the very glory of the grace of Christ, as love, that it rose into this wonderful height and universality. All men were infinitely precious and divine in Christ's sight, for He saw them all consciously and unconsciously going into the outstretched arms of God. Therefore He could not help loving them all. That is the grace of Christ—the loving-kindness of Jesus—the human love raised into the Divine without losing one touch of its humanity, save only as light is lost in greater light. I pray that this grace of Christ be with you all; the grace of natural love lifted into Divine and universal love through faith in the Fatherhood of God. It is Christ's to give because He had it, and when we have it we can give it also. Gain

it and give it, and you will be blessed and a blessing. Secondly, grace has another meaning other than loving-kindness. It means the kind of beauty we express by the word charm; and in this sense we may translate the text, "The beautiful charm of Christ be with you all." Do you remember how, when the world-worn Pharisee expressed his scorn of the sinful woman, Christ felt her boundless love, and said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much"; how, when Mary sat at His feet and was blamed by Martha, He alone saw love and rightness of choice in her silence; how, when the rude utilitarian saw waste in the extravagant love which lavished on Him the precious spikenard, He accepted it, not for its extravagance, but for its passion; how when Peter had sinned by a threefold treachery, He believed in the repentance, and only gave one look of sore and loving reproach; how, when He was dying, He provided for His friend a mother, and for His mother a son? What charm, what grace in them all! And their beauty could not stand alone. That kind of exquisite sensitiveness flowered through the whole of His life with men. It was His grace, and all felt its charm. Nor is it less seen in His speech than in His act. In directness, in temperance, in a certain sweet wisdom and ordered humanity, and in the beauty that results from these, there is nothing in the loveliest Greek work which matches the parables of Christ, or such sayings as "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"; or "Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c. In thinking of Him as the Man of Sorrows, in having imposed on us by the ascetic that He had no form or comeliness, we forget what must have been His irresistible charm. In the reaction which Christendom felt from that heathen worship of beauty which ended in moral deformity, nay, linked beauty to sensualism, the loveliness of Christ was too long hidden from us; we lost the sense of His grace in the meaning which the nobler Greek would have given to the term. Do not you forget it. Seek the blessing of the charm that comes of sensitiveness to the feelings of others, of sensitiveness to all that is beautiful, of an inward harmony of nature, and of the expression of that harmony in beautiful act and speech. Say to yourselves in this sense also, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with me and all." And if we are worthy of it and see it, He will give it to us. It is given, indeed, through our seeing it. The moment we see loveliness we cannot help desiring it, and the moment we desire it we begin our effort after it. It is by being beautiful that Christ gives us of His beauty, and makes us into His image. It is in quite a natural, and not a supernatural manner that we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." Once more, His grace and His love of doing and being the Beautiful was not apart from, or greater than, His love of, and doing of moral things, but coincident with them. Nothing which was false or impure or unjust was, in itself, beautiful to Christ, and the first glory of His grace and charm was its harmony with righteousness. We look at it, then, not only with tenderness, such as we feel for loving-kindness, not only with delight, such as we feel for beauty, but also with all that earnest approval and grave enthusiasm which we give to things and persons who are good. Christ's charm has its root in love, and is identical with truth and justice and purity and courage. It grasps the hand of the Platonist and the Stoic alike, without the vagueness of the one and the rigour of the other. And while it holds to the Epicurean so far as the early Epicureans said that pleasure was the highest good because goodness was identical with pleasure, it turns aside from the later Epicureans and from those of our day who put pleasure in beauty first, to the loss or lessening of moral goodness. Guarded thus on all sides, yet taking in all that is noble in all efforts to find the highest good, it was in truth grace in its sense of beauty that Christ possessed. That grace, so guarded, so complete, pray that it may be with you all in the year. It will bless your lives and it will make of you a blessing. It will make you at one with all that is tender, pitiful, dear, and sweet in human loving-kindness. It will make you at one with all that is sensitive and delicate and graceful in manner and speech, and create in you an harmonious soul. Men will think your life beautiful, and inspiration and effort will flow from it. It will make you at one with moral good, just and true and pure. And it will take all that is loving in humanity, and all that is fair, and all that is moral, and link them to and complete them by uniting them to the love of God, and to God's love for all men; so that to human love and moral love and imaginative love will be added the spiritual love which gathers them all into perfection. (*S. A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The last words of the Old and New Testaments* (see Matt. iv. 6):—Just as Christ, in His ascension, was

taken from them whilst His hands were lifted up in the act of blessing, so it is fitting that the revelation of which He is the centre and the theme should part from us as He did, shedding with its final words the dew of benediction on our upturned heads. I. THE APPARENT CONTRAST AND THE REAL HARMONY AND UNITY OF THESE TWO TEXTS. "Lest I come and smite the land with a curse." If instead of the word "curse" we were to substitute the word "destruction," we should get the true idea of the passage. And the thought that I want to insist upon is this, that here we have distinctly gathered up the whole spirit of milleniums of Divine revelation, all of which declare this one thing, that as certainly as there is a God, every transgression and disobedience receives, and must receive, its just recompense of reward. That is the spirit of law, for law has nothing to say, except, "Do this, and thou shalt live; do not this, and thou shalt die." And then turn to the other. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What has become of the thunder? All melted into dewy rain of love and pity and compassion. Grace is love that stoops; grace is love that foregoes its claims, and forgives sins against itself. Grace is love that imparts, and this grace, thus stooping, thus pardoning, thus bestowing, is a universal gift. So there is a very real and significant contrast. "I come and smite the earth with a curse" sounds strangely unlike "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." So I want you to notice that beneath this apparent contrast there is a real harmony, and that these two utterances, though they seem to be so diverse, are quite consistent at bottom, and must both be taken into account if we would grasp the whole truth. For, as a matter of fact, nowhere are there more tender utterances and sweeter revelations of a Divine mercy than in that ancient law with its attendant prophets. And, as a matter of fact, nowhere, through all the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai, are there such solemn words of retribution as dropped from the lips of the Incarnate Love. There is nothing anywhere so dreadful as Christ's own words about what comes, and must come, to sinful men. II. THE RELATION OF THE GRACE TO THE PUNISHMENT. Is it not love which proclaims judgment? Are not the words of my first text, if you take them all, merciful, however they wear a surface of threatening? "Lest I come." Then He speaks that He may not come, and declares the issue of sin in order that that issue may never need to be experienced by us that listen to Him. It is love that threatens; it is mercy to tell us that the wrath will come. And just as one relation between the grace and the retribution is that the proclamation of the retribution is the work of the grace, so there is another relation—the grace is manifested in bearing the punishment, and in bearing it away by bearing it. He has come between every one of us, if we will, and that certain incidence of retribution for our evil, taking upon Himself the whole burden of our sin and of our guilt, and bearing that awful death which consists not in the mere dissolution of the tie between soul and body, but in the separation of the conscious spirit from God, in order that we may stand peaceful, serene, untouched, when the hail and the fire of the Divine judgment are falling from the heavens and running along the earth. The grace depends for all our conceptions of its glory, its tenderness, and its depth on our estimate of the wrath from which it delivers. III. THE ALTERNATIVE which these texts open for us. You must have either the destruction or the grace. And, more wonderful still, the same coming of the same Lord will be to one man the destruction, and to another the manifestation and reception of His perfect grace. As it was in the Lord's first coming, "He is set for the rise and the fall of many in Israel." The same heat softens some substances and bakes others into hardness. The same gospel is "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," by the giving forth of the same influences killing the one and reviving the other; the same Christ is a Stone to build upon or a Stone of stumbling; and when He cometh at the last, Prince, King, Judge, to you and me, His coming shall be prepared as the morning; and ye "shall have a song as in the night as when one cometh with a pipe to the mountain of the Lord"; or else it shall be a day of darkness and not of light. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*:—These are the last words of the second volume of God to man. The last word that God has to give to man in His holy book is a blessing upon man. Could any one wish you more or better than that the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be yours, be mine"? Now, look first at what the grace of the Lord Jesus is. The word "grace" is used in the New Testament in two distinct senses:—First, it is the grace that belongs to Christ Himself; the grace or graces of Christ. Second, it is the grace, or great grace, or great gift that Christ gives to men. Now, look, first, at the grace of Christ—the personal grace. Christ seemingly was the most attractive of men

in His personality. He exercised over the men and women of His time a strong personal fascination. It is rather strange that there is no real portrait or picture of Christ in His human form. But I think it is a great advantage rather than otherwise that we have no picture of His person. For myself, I always picture the Lord Jesus as a man of great attractiveness personally, of winning demeanour, and His whole personality one such as to attract and win to Himself. I will give you three simple reasons for this. Notice, first, that Christ was come of a kingly race—of the house of David. Now, David himself was a man famed for his physical beauty; so were his sons—two, at least—men of great physical beauty and attractiveness; and, if there is one great lesson that modern science has taught us, it is the lesson of heredity; and I do not press it too far if I say that Christ had the grace and beauty of His predecessors. In the second place, if you will study Christ's life, you will find there are particular occasions when the majesty of His person impressed all around Him, and especially His disciples. Third, He seems to have had a great attraction for children. Now, no one who is not attractive in his personality, and has not sweetness of countenance, has that subtle attraction for children which will draw them to him. It is well to strive to have the graces of Christ. Let us strive, each according to our endowments from the Most High, to exercise this sweet attractiveness of personality—to become not only good and strong men as Christians, but to become attractive and winning; I would venture to say, have the winsomeness of Christ. This seems to me to be the first great personal grace of Christ, winsomeness; but there are deeper and richer graces than this that Christ had, and which we may all have. I would ask you to notice three great graces in addition to His personality—the graces of character, the great root graces. He had that most beautiful of graces—the grace of humility. I have noticed in life that the greater a man's position is, the greater is his power; the higher his position, mentally or worldly, the more he is admired, if he be a humble man; that seemingly the admiration for his humility increases in the ratio of his worldly greatness. Now this is just the wonderful quality about Christ. We speak of the good ones and the great ones of the earth, but there is no one who can compare in the least with Christ, the Son of God, for greatness, power, might, intellect: for every quality that man recognises as great. Christ is the great revelation of God—not merely man but God Himself of very God. And the great and wonderful thing about His humility is that He emptied Himself, as Paul says, of this Divine majesty and power, and came down to this world, became of no repute, humble as the humblest, born in a manger, living and working at the carpenter's bench. That is somewhat of the humility of Christ. It is a great virtue. It is a temptation for us all at times, not to feel humble, but to become self-confident. Having put before you the infinite grace and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray for you and for myself that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—the grace of Divine humility—may be yours, may be mine. His humility was His second great grace; and His third was His unselfishness. Christ, I think, is most wonderful of all for His unselfishness. Christ, the Son of God, endowed with every quality that would make a man a success in the world—endowed with the richest intellectual and spiritual gifts—laid them all aside, or only used them for the sake of others. Pray that the grace of the unselfishness of our Lord Jesus Christ may be ours. And then just a few words upon another grace. I have spoken of His personal attractiveness, His humility, His unselfishness; greater than these gifts and graces is the last—love, love. The measure of a man's greatness, whether he be great in the world or little, the true measure of a man's greatness is his power for love. That is the greatest power for men and women—their capacity for love, Divine love, human love. In Christ you have the most perfect example of it, His Divine love for God His Father, was absolutely perfect. What shall I say of His love to man? We cannot grasp it; a finite mind like yours and mine cannot adequately realise the greatness of the love of God: we can only adore it. Love that led Him to live, to die, to sacrifice everything for men and women like you and me. Above all the graces you can have, get love—love that brightens, love that deepens, love that purifies men's natures. These were simply some of Christ's own graces or gifts. What is the great grace or gift that He has to give to men? It is simply the forgiveness of our sins. Is that a little thing? Men seem to think that it is. If you would take a deeper view of yourself and human nature, you would see what a great thing it really is. Sin that caused the death of God's Son is a dreadful thing; it ruins, and mars, and corrupts your nature and mine. The greatest gift that could be made to men, is the forgiveness of their sins. I

have tried to show you the graces of Christ's person, His attractiveness, His unselfishness, His humility, and His love; all these gifts are in vain unless you get the great gift of forgiveness of sins from Christ, the foundation of every grace and virtue possible to man. This gift may be had by all here, young and old. It is a gift that is not limited to the young, to little children, to men in the prime of their days, or to old men. It is a great gift for all. If you and I could get first the grace of forgiveness, then those of personal attractiveness, humility, unselfishness, and greatest of all graces and gifts, the love of Christ—love like Christ's—earth were heaven now. Men speak of a golden age that shall come; saints and sages have spoken of it; there is an instinctive craving of the human heart after a golden age that shall dawn; could the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ really be with you and me, now were the golden age, not in the time to come, but now, in this daily life of ours. One day we shall not have to say "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all"; but we shall say the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us all. (*Wm. Souper, M.A.*)

The free love of Christ:—Thus the Bible closes with blessing. In this prayer we have the summing-up of all the blessings which the Word of God has uttered. Man is simply the receiver and the enjoyer of a love as boundless as it is unbought.

I. WHAT IS THIS GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? Free love! Divine favour, unbought, unsolicited, and undeserved! Return to your Father's house, and be blest! Come, and be forgiven! Look, and be saved! Touch, and be healed! Ask, and it shall be given! **II. HOW IT HAS BEEN SHOWN.** In many ways, but chiefly in the Cross. The words of Christ were grace; the doings of Christ were grace; but at the Cross it came forth most fully. The "it is finished" of Golgotha was the throwing down of the barriers that stood between the sinner and the grace. The grace itself was uncreated and eternal; it did not originate in the purpose, but in the nature of God. Still its outflow to sinners was hemmed in by righteousness; and until this was satisfied at the Cross the grace was like forbidden fruit to man. Divine displeasure against sin and Divine love of holiness found their complete satisfaction at the altar, where the "consuming fire" devoured the great burnt-offering, and gave full vent to the pent-up stores of grace. **III. HOW WE GET IT.** Simply by taking it as it is, and as we are; by letting it flow into us; by believing God's testimony concerning it. Grace supposes no preparation whatsoever in him who receives it, save that of worthlessness and guilt, whether these be felt or unfelt. The dryness of the ground is that which fits it for the rain; the poverty of the beggar is that which fits him for the alms; so the sin of the sinner is that which fits him for the grace of Christ. If anything else were needed, grace would be no more grace, but would become work or merit. Where sin abounds there it is that grace much more abounds. **IV. WHAT IT DOES FOR US.** 1. It pardons. 2. It pacifies. 3. It liberates. 4. It enlightens. 5. It strengthens. 6. It purifies. **V. HOW LONG IT LASTS:** For ever. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Till we meet again:*—This is an expression suitable to the most gracious heart, a prayer wherewith the believer may vent his best wishes and express his most devout desires.

I. CONSIDER THIS BENEDICTION. 1. What is this which John desires? The word is "*charis*." It has for its root "joy." There is joy at the bottom of *charis*, or grace. It also signifieth favour, kindliness, and especially love. Jesus Christ Himself is generally mentioned in our benedictions as having grace, and the Father as having love; and our usual benediction begins with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God. Is that the proper order? The order is correct to our experience, and in an instructive benediction the Holy Spirit intendeth this for our learning. The Father's love is, as it were, the secret, mysterious germ of everything. That same love in Jesus Christ is grace; His is love in its active form, love descending to earth, love wearing human nature, love paying the great ransom price, love ascending, love sitting and waiting, love pleading, love soon to come with power and glory. This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the grace of a Divine person. We wish you, as we wish for ourselves, the grace of God Himself, rich, boundless, unfathomable, immutable, Divine; no temporary grace such as some speak of, which keepeth not its own, but suffereth even the sheep of its own pasture to go astray and perish; but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is written, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"; that grace most potent which said, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." This is no small treasure—this grace of a Divine Person. Yet is our Lord Jesus also human, as truly human as He is Divine, and, believing in Him, you have the grace of Jesus Christ the Man

to be with you all. May you feel His tenderness, His brotherliness, His grace. He is your Kinsman, and He graciously favours His own kinsfolk. Read the text again, and pause a while in the middle to enjoy "The grace of our Lord." The grace that cometh from His Majesty, the grace that cometh from His Headship, the grace that cometh from His Divinely human supremacy over His Church, which is His body—this is the grace which we desire for you all. Read the next word: "The grace of our Lord Jesus." May that be with you; that is to say, the grace of our Saviour, for that is the meaning of the word "Jesus." All His saving grace, all that which redeems from guilt, from sin, from trouble, all that which saves us with an everlasting salvation—may that be yours to the full. Then comes the other word, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you"; may He, as the Anointed One, visit you. May you have that anointing from the Holy One which shall make you know all things. 2. Our next division is, How? "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What meaneth this? Our first answer is the wish that the grace of our Lord may rest upon you as a matter of fact—that He may love you truly and intensely; love you, not only as He loves the world, but as He loved His own which were in the world. Next, may you believe that grace, may you trust that grace, may it be with you because your faith has closed in with it, and you are relying upon it. Still further, may His grace be with you as the object of faith, so that your belief comes to be full assurance, till you know the love which Christ hath towards you, and no more doubt it than you doubt the love of the dearest friend you have on earth. And may His grace be with you, next, as to the favours which flow out of it. May you enjoy all the blessings which the grace of Christ can yield, the grace of a peaceful conscience, the grace of a cleansed walk, the grace of access to God, the grace of fervent love, the grace of holy expectancy, the grace of self-denial, the grace of perfect consecration, and the grace of final perseverance. And may grace be with us, next, so as to produce constant communion between us and Christ, His favour flowing into our heart, and our hearts returning their gratitude. Oh, to come to this pass, that our Well-beloved is with us, and we enjoy sweet mutual intercourse: this is to have the love, or grace, of Jesus with us. May our Lord Jesus Christ thus in His grace be with us, and may He work for us all that He can work. What better benediction could John Himself utter? 3. But, now, the third part of our discourse comes under the head of "to whom." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Every now and then you come across a book written by one who is a long way off from understanding all the truth, yet he knows Jesus Christ, and as you read the sweet words that come from His pen concerning the Master you feel your heart knit to Him. If a man knows Christ he knows the most important of matters, and is possessed of a secret quite as precious as any in our own keeping, for what know we more than Christ, and what hope have we but in Christ? There is a life which is the same in all that have it, however diverse they may happen to be upon opinion or outward ceremony. There is a life eternal, and that life is Christ Jesus, and to all that have that life we do with intensity of heart say, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." II. THE POSITION OF THIS BENEDICTION. First, I draw what I have to say from the fact that it is the last word of Scripture. I regard it, therefore, as being the apostle's last and highest wish. We cannot do with less than this, and we do not want more than this. If we get grace from Jesus we shall have glory with Jesus, but without it we are without hope. Standing at the end of the Book of Revelation as this does, I next regard its position as indicating what we shall want till the end comes; that is, from now till the descent of our Lord in His second advent. This is the one thing we require, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." May it be with us daily, hourly! May it be with us, instructing us as to our behaviour in each generation! Placed as this blessing is at the end of the book there is but this one more thought—this is what we shall wish for when the end cometh. We shall come to the end of life, as we come to the end of our Bibles. And oh, aged friend, may thy failing eyes be cheered with the sight of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the last page of life, as thou wilt find it on the last page of thy well-thumbed Bible. Peradventure some of you may come to the last page of life before you get grace: I pray that there you may find it. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Or, suppose we should not die; suppose the Lord should suddenly come in His temple. Oh, then may we have grace to meet Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A faithful minister's parting blessing*:—First, His restraining grace. Why, if it were not for this, God's people would be just as weak and wicked as other folks are. Secondly, there is convicting

grace, which from the Lord Jesus Christ acts every day and hour. A man may speak to the ear, but it is the Spirit of God alone can speak to the heart. What does Jesus Christ do in temptations, trials, and afflictions? He fetches His people home, and convinces them that they have done amiss. Thirdly, there is the converting grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a most excellent prayer in our commination office, "Turn us, O good Lord, and we shall be turned." We can no more turn our hearts than we can turn the world upside down; it is the Redeemer, by His Spirit, must take away the heart of stone, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit give us a heart of flesh. Then there is establishing grace. David prays, "Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me." In the margin it is "constant spirit"; and you hear of some that are rooted and grounded in the love of God, and the apostle prays that they may always abound in the work of the Lord. Again, it is good to have the heart established with grace. There is a good many people have some religion in them, but they are not established. Hence they are mere weather-cocks, turned about by every wind of doctrine. What think you of the Redeemer's comforting grace? Oh, what can you do without it? "In the multitude of my thoughts within me," says the psalmist, "Thy comforts have refreshed my soul." And there are so many afflictions and trials, that if it were not for the Lord Jesus Christ's comfortings, no flesh could bear them. In a word, what think you of the quickening grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Remember David says, "Quicken me according to Thy word, quicken me in Thy way, quicken me in Thy righteousness." God's people want quickening every day; this is trimming our lamps, girding up the loins of our minds, stirring up the gift of God that is in us. It is just with a soul as it is with the plants and trees; how would it be with them if the Lord did not command quickening life to them after the winter? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with His people in prayer. Who can pray without grace? The grace of God is with His people in His providence. "Oh," says Bishop Hall, "a little aid is not enough for me." My going on the waters puts me in mind of what I have seen many times. If the sailors perceive a storm coming, they do not choose to speak to the passengers for fear of frightening them; they will go quietly on deck, and give orders for proper care to be taken; and if a sailor can tell of storms approaching by the clouds, why cannot God's people tell why God does so and so with them? The people of God eye Him in His providence; the very hairs of their heads are all numbered, and the grace of God is with them in the common business of life. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with His people when sick and when dying. Oh, what shall we do when death comes? What a mercy it is that we have got a good Master to carry us through that time! (*G. Whitefield, M.A.*) Amen.—*The Church's Amen*:—I. THE LAST TESTIMONY. The whole Bible is the testimony; for in it Christ is both the Teacher and the Lesson, the Witness and the Testimony. But the Revelation is His last testimony; and the marvellous words of the latter part of this chapter are more especially so. Let the Church listen; let the world give heed. II. THE LAST PROPHECY. "Surely I come quickly." Brief but distinct is this announcement; and it comes from His own lips. He heralds Himself and His kingdom. He puts the trumpet to His own mouth to sound abroad this last message, "I come!" I who came, and departed, am coming again. "I come quickly." Here is something more. He will lose no time; nor delay a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. He will not be slack concerning His promise (2 Pet. iii. 9); He will come and not tarry (Heb. x. 37). "Surely I come quickly." Appearances may indicate no such thing; the world's sky may be cloudless, and its sea smooth; men may have assured themselves of prosperous days, and be saying, "Peace and safety"; yet surely He cometh! As a snare, as a thief, as lightning, He cometh. He, the very Christ, the risen Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth—He cometh! In His own glory, in His Father's glory, with His mighty angels, in the clouds of heaven, King and Judge, Conqueror and Avenger, Redresser of wrongs, Opener of prison-doors, Binder of Satan, Renewer of creation, Bridegroom of His Church, Star of Jacob, Sun of Righteousness, Owner of the golden sceptre, Wielder of the iron rod, Wearer of the crowns of earth—He cometh! III. THE LAST PRAYER—"Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus"; or more literally, "Yes, surely, come, Lord Jesus"; for the words the apostle here uses, in his response, are the same as those used by Christ in His announcement; as if he caught up the Master's words and echoed them. Thus gladly and fervently does the Church respond to the promise; as one who felt the blank created by the Lord's absence, and welcomed with her whole heart the intimation of His return. This is the summing-up of her petitions, as

was the seventy-second Psalm the filling up of all David's prayers (Psa. lxxii. 20). Are our hearts, like hers, thus beating toward the Beloved One? Is this the burden of our prayers? IV. **THE LAST BLESSING.** "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Earthly, human love, is of all things here the most fitted to gladden; how much more, then, that which is heavenly and Divine! V. **THE LAST AMEN.** This is not an amen to this chapter only, or this book only; but to the whole Bible, of which the burden, from Genesis to Revelation, is Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman. It is an amen to the prayer for the grace of Christ; it is an amen to the sigh for the Lord's appearing. It is an amen to the prophetic announcement of all the glorious and all the terrible things written in this book. It is the concentrated utterance of the Church's longings; her glad response to all that God has spoken; the subscription of her name to her belief in all that the Holy Spirit has written; the summing-up of her unutterable groan. How much does this amen comprise! Faith, hope, and love are in it; and, with these, such a boundless satisfaction of spirit as can only get vent to itself in that one brief word, which sums up all the aspirations of its joy, "Amen and amen!" (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The last amen:—* Amen is a Hebrew word, signifying truth and certainty in the first place; and then our affirmation of something as a certainty, or our desire that it should be so. It comes also to signify faithfulness and steadfastness in a person, so that that person is himself regarded as truth personified—the truth, the Amen. Hence it is that Christ takes to Himself the designation of the Truth, and the Amen—the faithful and true Witness. Further, it has come to signify faith and confidence—specially faith and confidence in God. It is the word used in reference to Abraham, "He believed God," and to Israel, "They believed the Lord." But it is with the common use of it that we have now to do—that use of it which we make daily when we conclude even our shortest prayer. Amen; that is, so let it be; let it be according to our request, and according to Thy promise. Used in this way it means much. There are, however, different ways of using it; different feelings with which it is uttered: and it is to these that we would now attend. I. **THERE IS THE AMEN OF IGNORANCE.** Simple and common as the word is, thousands use it without knowing what it means, or what they themselves intend. It is to them a word, no more; a concluding word or sound, where the voice ceases, and after which the eyes are opened, and the hands unclasped! Are your Amens of this kind? or are they uttered with the understanding—the full realisation of the large and solemn meaning which they contain? II. **THE AMEN OF HABIT.** All are not ignorant of its significance. Ask many what they intend by affixing it to their prayers, and at once they will tell you. Yet mark them, and you will find the word slipping from their tongue without any corresponding thought as to its sense. Are your Amens those of habit—pieces of ornament, the useless appendages of useless devotion—or is your soul thrown into them? Are they the essence of your previous petitions—the concentration and summing-up of all your desires? III. **THE AMEN OF UNBELIEF.** It seems strange that a word like this should ever be uttered in unbelief; yet such is the case. Nay, sometimes it would seem as if the most unbelieving part of our prayer is that which should be the most believing—the Amen. We may well wonder how it should be so. It seems almost incredible that a word like this, meant to be associated with faithfulness, and truth, and certainty, should be connected with unbelief, nay, should be the utterance of unbelief—the frequent, the daily utterance of unbelief; yet so it is. Our unbelieving Amens are about the most melancholy parts of our prayers—the worst indications of distrust in God. IV. **THE AMEN OF FAITH.** This is the true Amen; the Amen of souls who have heard the gracious words of Him who cannot lie, and who act upon these. But why should Amen be thus linked with faith? Because that which calls it forth is not simply a desirable thing, but a truth and a certainty. It has to do with such things as the following: 1. The free love of God. In every prayer we keep our eye on this; for without the recognition of this grace, this abundant grace, what would prayer be? 2. The truthfulness of God. God is true—truthful, faithful; we will not make Him a liar in any one thing, in any of our communications with Him—least of all in our prayers. 3. The power of God. What He has promised He is able also to perform. He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, above all we ask. In addition to these things, to which the faith of our Amens attaches itself, we would only further say that it specially leans upon the Cross of Christ in connection with these three. It is round that Cross that this faith flings its arms; it is here that it sits down in quiet satisfaction. V. **THE AMEN OF HOPE.** We say, "Hallowed be Thy name," and we add the Amen of hope; "Thy kingdom come,"

and we add the Amen of hope; "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," and we add the Amen of hope. We hear the Lord's own voice from heaven saying, "Surely I come quickly," and we add with the apostle: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen!" Each time we utter the Amen in connection with these blessed futurities, does our hope kindle up anew—the hope calling up the Amen, and the Amen making the hope to shine out with fresh brightness? In anticipating such a future, how can we utter a cold, heartless, passive, or despairing Amen? VI. THE AMEN OF JOY. It is the joy of conscious pardon; the joy of friendship with God; the joy of adoption and heirship; the joy of our whole new created being; the joy because of the blessedness in prospect. Past, present, and future—all furnish us with materials for joy. And in our thanksgivings for the past, we breathe out an Amen of joy; in our consciousness of present peace and heavenly favour, we repeat our Amen of joy; in our pleadings for larger blessing to ourselves and to our world, we say Amen with gladness; and in our pressing forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling, looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God, we say Amen and Amen with ever-deepening joy of heart. (*Ibid.*)

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